



Waverley Square Rezoning Spurs Debate

By Sue Bass

Can Belmont transform Waverley Square into a pedestrian-friendly business district? That's quite a challenge. Now, despite previous efforts to improve the square, much of it looks like a strip mall with a highway running through it.

"Do you like the square the way it is?" asked Jay Szklut, Belmont's Planning and Economic Development Manager in a recent interview. "We don't have to change anything. I think most people would say it could be improved. But define 'improve.' "

Half a dozen community meetings have been held over the last year in the Butler School by the town's Planning Board and the Community Development Department to work toward a consensus. Residents have tried to define improvement both in the abstract and while considering proposals presented by Feldco Development Corp. of New Canaan, Connecticut. That firm would like to put a medical office building in Waverley Square. Despite much frustration, some progress has been made. Some options have become clearer.

Triangle, First-Floor Retail are Must-Haves

One thing seems sacred: the small town-owned triangle in the center of the square, bounded by Trapelo Road, Lexington Street, and Church Street. A year ago, Feldco was proposing a five-story flatiron building there. That plan is dead. The triangle is now split between green space and municipal parking. Options include expanding the green space if other public parking can be found. In a recent interview, Szklut said he'd like to see the triangle redesigned so it feels welcoming, like an urban gathering place.

Another established feature is first-floor retail. The Planning Board has made it clear that the ground floors of all new buildings in all the town's business districts should be occupied by stores. No more unwelcoming facades like those of several existing Belmont apartment and office buildings, they say: any business district rezoning will require retail businesses on the first floor.

Any proposed rezoning of Waverley Square is also likely to include a limit of three stories by right—that is, without a special permit granted on a case-by-case basis. In fact, Szklut said that some parts of the square should be limited to two stories. On the other hand, he also thinks four stories should be allowed by special permit in some places.

Three stories by right was also the recommendation of a town consultant, the Cecil Group of Boston, which participated in many of the community meetings. The Group was discharged before drafting zoning language. That work will be done by the town's planning staff, Szklut and Planning Coordinator Jeffrey Wheeler.

Szklut Proposes Varying Building Heights

Szklut said a draft rezoning of Waverley Square is likely to be presented to the public and the Planning Board in September, if only to provide a focus for discussion. He hopes the draft will be ready for consideration at a fall Town Meeting.

Here's what Szklut is thinking about:

- In the triangle bounded by Trapelo Road, the railroad tracks, and Pleasant Street as far north as the Waverly Landscape building at 1010 Pleasant Street: three stories, especially along Trapelo Road. Szklut would like to see a

landscaped pedestrian path parallel to the tracks and out to Pleasant Street between Waverly Landscaping and Shaw's parking lot. A strip of town-owned land runs between the two businesses. That land was once part of White Street before the railroad gulch cut it off. In that zone only, "I'd recommend an incentive-based fourth story," Szklut said. He suggests a developer could agree to do something substantial for the town in return for the extra space. The example he cited is building a municipal garage so parking could be moved off the central triangle to increase the amount of green space. But, he asks, "Where is the money going to come from?"

- A second triangle on the north side of Trapelo Road, from the tracks to White Street, including the tracks themselves: Also three stories by right but with no option for a fourth story.

- South of Trapelo Road, two segments bordering the central triangle, from White Street and Thayer Street to Lexington Street and also from Thayer Road across the tracks to Moraine Street, one block deep from Lexington to Agassiz Avenue: generally not higher than it is now. "Nothing above three stories," Szklut said. "Maybe it's more appropriate at two."

In that segment, over the railroad tracks off Lexington Street, Szklut would like to see a new municipal parking garage to increase parking and make the triangle greener.

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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.

Medical Offices Raise Concerns

One big concern is the medical office building that Feldco is proposing, because medical offices generate a lot of traffic. "Those 15-minute appointments!" sighed Karl Haglund, a member of the Planning Board, when the board discussed the issue in June. The board considered whether new zoning could legally disallow such a use. The conclusion was that it could.

Jeffrey Feldman of Cambridge, the local representative of Feldco, said he hopes the town does not rule out a medical building in Waverley Square, conceding that Feldco does have a prospective tenant for medical office space. A ban on medical offices would effectively kill Feldco's desire to develop in Waverley Square. "We can't just say, 'Waverley Square is a great place; if you build it, they will come.' . . . For us to move forward without having an anchor tenant would be impossible."

As a matter of client confidentiality, Feldman would not identify his prospective tenant, but he said the building would be nothing like 725 Concord Avenue in Cambridge, a Mount Auburn Hospital medical building. That building, he said, "is significantly bigger than anything that could possibly happen in Waverley Square."

Rather than restricting uses to control traffic, Feldman said, Belmont should develop tough rules on traffic and include those requirements in the rezoning. Those standards might make

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The Belmont Citizens Forum is Turning 10 Years Old

Come Celebrate Two Ways!

10th Anniversary Celebration

Sunday, November 1, 7:30 p.m.

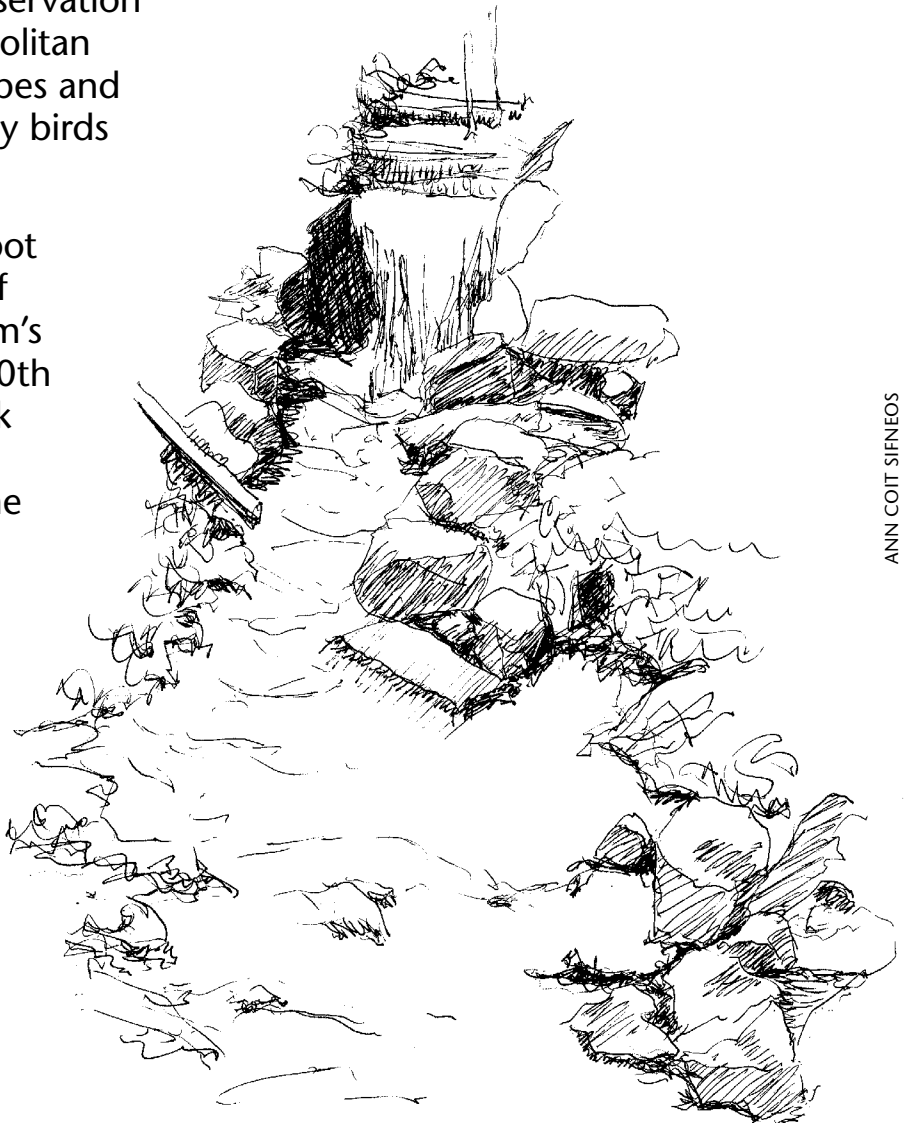
Look for your invitation in the mail this fall, or e-mail info@belmontcitizensforum.org if you'd like to attend.

Beaver Brook North Reservation Walk

Saturday, September 26, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Join the Waltham Land Trust and the Belmont Citizens Forum for a walk through Beaver Brook North Reservation formerly the land of the Metropolitan State Hospital. Birders Jason Forbes and Florence DiTirro will help identify birds along the trail.

The walk will be followed by a potluck picnic in joint celebration of both the Belmont Citizens Forum's and the Waltham Land Trust's 10th year anniversary! Bring a potluck item to share and chairs and/or blankets to enjoy your lunch. The Belmont Citizens Forum and the Waltham Land Trust will provide plates, cups, utensils, and water. Information: www.walthamlandtrust.org, 781-893-3355, chutchison@walthamlandtrust.org. Elsie Turner Field parking lot, 381 Trapelo Road, Waltham.



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some uses a practical impossibility, he said, but if a developer can figure out a way to meet the standards, the uses should be allowed. "That would be our challenge as creative developers," he said.

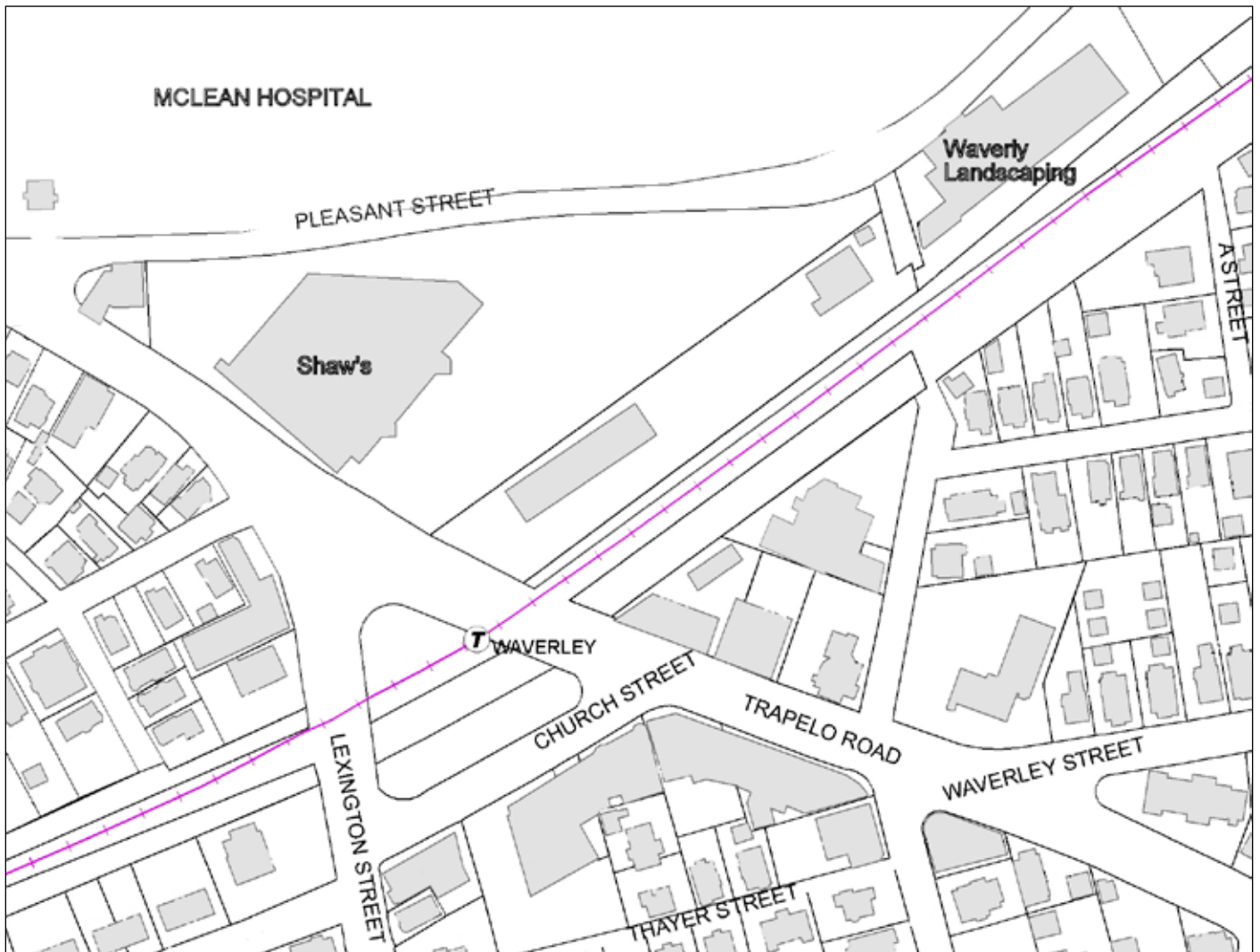
No proposal is on the table now. After being burned last summer, when their suggestion to build five stories on the town-owned triangle was shot down, Feldman said, "What we're going to do is wait and see what Belmont wants for Waverley Square."

"Waverley will become more and more important in the next few years," said Robert Kennedy, a Boston architect who is a precinct 3 Town Meeting Member. "We have an opportunity here that is very large and very rare."

"My biggest concern is that I have heard absolutely no considerations for the future impact of [the] McLean development and its traffic implications," Kennedy said. That includes not only traffic onto Pleasant Street from future development on the McLean campus, but also "a potential bus/train connection terminal."

Waverley Bus Terminal to be Studied

Two large developments are allowed by zoning on the McLean land and still expected to occur, both with traffic pouring onto Pleasant Street: a continuing care retirement community of up to 600,000 square feet or other development replacing Freedom Commons and a 150,000-square-foot research and development complex. In addition, the MBTA and the town have been awarded \$140,000 in federal funds



Waverley Square

to study the possibility of combining Belmont's current two commuter rail stations into a single station and building associated facilities, including a bus terminal and probably a garage on Pleasant Street. A request for proposals from consultants will likely go out in September. When the study begins, it would probably take six to nine months, Szklut said.

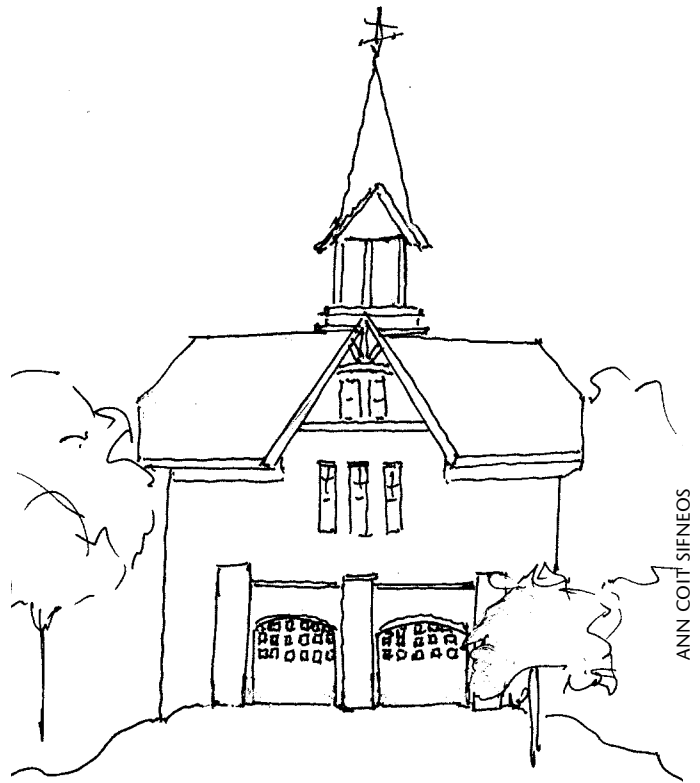
"Such a future terminal would almost certainly have to be located north of Trapelo Road and would provide the opportunity for a different pattern of new shopping determined by the needs of the terminal location," Kennedy said. "To rezone that area now, without such input or study or consideration, could likely make this terminal very difficult and provide obstacles that make the task impossible. To propose solutions without the homework considerations is just foolish," he said.

Another critic who has been following the process carefully is Judith Ananian Sarno, also a Town Meeting Member from Precinct 3. "Although we have not seen the final rezoning proposals, to date no rezoning scheme we've seen includes the necessary restrictions to ensure our current and much-needed [future] revenue is protected," she said. Suppose we accept a large development based on promises of lots of new tax revenue and instead a tax-exempt nonprofit moves in, she wondered. "We must demand thoughtful planning that will truly benefit the town of Belmont, with respect to both the vibrancy it can contribute to the Waverley Square area and to the revenues that commercial development can generate for the town."

Town Starts Comprehensive Zoning

Meanwhile, the Planning Board is working on two other zoning efforts. One is a new comprehensive plan for the entire town, a detailed master plan that would envision how the town should be encouraged to develop or not. This is a multi-year project. Some information about the first phase is available on the web site of Larry Koff and Associates, the town's consultant: www.lkoffassociates.com/Belmont.html. Later, zoning would be written to implement the plan.

The other zoning effort is a temporary overlay district for Central and Palfrey Squares, east of



Waverley Square on Trapelo Road. That overlay district is almost certain to come before Town Meeting this fall. That proposal would allow buildings up to three stories or 36 feet by special permit for about tow-and-a-half years, without waiting for the comprehensive plan. As overlay zoning, it would be an additional option for landowners. It would not replace the current zoning.

The overlay district was inspired largely by a small mixed-use development planned by Selectman Angelo Firenze, who owns a former gas station site at 395 Trapelo Road. When he bought it, Firenze intended to build a manufacturing facility for gelato for his son, also Angelo. However, the business, Angelato, expanded so quickly that it moved manufacturing out of town. Rather than sell the property, the selectman proposed building a new structure with both retail and housing. His preliminary plans have generally been well received both by neighbors and the Planning Board.

Sue Bass is a Director of the Belmont Citizens Forum.

Waverley Square Streets Will Get New Look

By Andrea Masciari

Once the new Belmont Street/Trapelo Road corridor design is implemented, the Waverley Square section of the Belmont Street/Trapelo Road corridor will see many changes. All street surfaces in the Square between Trapelo Road and Pleasant Street and between Lexington Street and Church Street will benefit from repaving. Most of the sidewalks will be rebuilt with special scoring patterns to differentiate them from the sidewalks in residential areas. A two-foot edging of colored concrete or simulated pavers will abut the curbs.

The public parking lot over the MBTA commuter rail station on Church Street will be rebuilt to allow for safer and more efficient traffic flow. New trees will be planted along Church Street and around the parking lot. The design replaces most of the regulatory and street name signs. To meet current standards, traffic signal installations will be replaced or updated.

As mandated for state-funded roadway projects, the Belmont/Trapelo corridor redesign includes four- to five-foot wide bicycle lanes on both sides of the street. Despite the corridor's

wide road surface, it was difficult to include bike lanes in all areas of the road.

Despite the corridor's wide road surface, it was difficult to include bike lanes in all areas of the road.

The Massachusetts Highway Department approved an idea brought to them by Peter Briere of the BSC Group consultants to narrow the car turning lanes at the Square's intersections in order to gain more width for the bicycle lanes.

Although most curb lines will remain as they are, there are two significant exceptions.



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- More bump-outs will be installed at several of the corridor's crosswalks to shorten the crossing distance and enable pedestrians to proceed more safely.
- The plan realigns the approaches of Waverley Street and the south leg of White Street to Trapelo Road. Both will now connect to Trapelo Road at angles greater than 90 degrees, slowing turning traffic. The crosswalk distances will be shortened here as well.

Now for some bad news. According to Glenn Clancy, Director of Community Development, Belmont is one of seven communities that lost out state funding to Concord's Crosby's Corner project which is estimated to cost \$73 million. Unfortunately, our own Corridor project is now scheduled for funding in 2014.

There's also good news. We are finally recognized on the state's list for Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) funds, though we are far from final approval. According to Clancy, "We could push that date up if something breaks in the state's funding schedule and we are in a position to take advantage. To have this happen we would need to continue our design efforts (which we are) and other projects in the queue ahead of us would have to be delayed (this happens often but can't be counted on).

"We will be submitting 75-percent-design drawings to Mass Highway by mid-September. There is no public hearing at the 75-percent-design phase through Mass Highway. However, the town may elect to hold one for informational purposes."

The Belmont Traffic Advisory CommitteeTAC will discuss the possibility of holding a 75% design phase public hearing and advise the Board of Selectmen.

Graphics showing the details of planned changes to the corridor are available on the town web site, belmontma.virtualtownhall.net; search for Trapelo Road/Belmont Street Reconstruction.

Andrea Masciari is a member of Belmont's Traffic Advisory Committee.

Walk-to-School Day

On October 7, public school students around town will be making the environment healthier and their bodies stronger by doing a very simple thing: walking to school. Several Belmont schools will be participating in International Walk-to-School day

Children can walk to school any day of the year, but most don't. According to the National Center for Safe Routes to School, nationwide, just ten percent of children walk to school—and only 25 percent of children who live within a mile of their schools do. Walk-to-School day helps more kids get to experience walking to school by providing "celebrity walker" teachers to guide them to school. Some schools also offer a "Traveler Ticket" program, where kids can get small prizes for walking to school.

Walk-to-School days do increase the number of children who walk to school, said Karen Parmett, Belmont School Committee member and a Walk-to-School organizer at the Wellington school. However, numbers tend to drop off in the winter when unshoveled snow blocks sidewalks, and children end up walking in the street. "[clearing sidewalks] is something everyone can do, and it makes a difference. It's a big barrier," Parmett said.

For more information, contact your local school's PTO or Karen Parmett at karen@barnoon.com, or see <http://www.walktoschool-usa.org>.

Polite Riding can Make Cycling Safer

by David Chase

The *Boston Globe* has run several articles and op-eds about bicycling in recent months. A recurring theme in these articles is the “bad behavior” of many cyclists. People on bikes roll through stop signs, run red lights, ride wrong-way, ride on sidewalks, and roll past pedestrians in crosswalks—and they seem almost proud of it. It all looks incredibly careless.

As a frequent cyclist, I find these complaints are incredibly irritating. If you take the time to look at traffic at all, you’ll see drivers breaking traffic laws all the time. They’re speeding, crossing the double-yellow, failing to stop at stop lines, rolling through stops, failing to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks, and failing to stop for red lights. Further, cyclists know full well that in any collision, even with a pedestrian, they are the party most likely to be injured, and have every incentive to do what is safe. By choosing to ride a bicycle instead of driving a car, they’ve already elected to keep other people safer than any driver on the road. So what’s the fuss?

The problem is not laws or safety, but social norms. No matter what the law says, as a community we have decided that we’re not offended by speeding cars that don’t toe the line at stop signs. Running red lights, on the other hand, is taboo, and because it is taboo, it attracts a lot of attention (and people don’t do it very often). The question for bicyclists is how to ride safely, and how to avoid breaking unwritten rules of traffic etiquette—which are two separate and sometimes conflicting goals.

Visible Cyclists are Safer

Bicyclists can do things that increase safety, and avoid risky practices. Bicycle safety is mostly a matter of visibility and predictability. If drivers can see you, they’ll steer so they won’t hit you. If you ride predictably in places where people look, they’re more likely to see you. If you learn to anticipate common human errors and avoid them, you’ll be even safer. The better you are at being visible, the happier drivers will

be, because they won’t be surprised by a cyclist appearing “out of nowhere”.

There are several ways to increase visibility. Bicycle fashion pretty much speaks (or screams) for itself. Somewhat less obvious is the choice of road; a straight wide road such as Park Avenue in Arlington Heights is better than a skinny curvy road like Prospect Street in Belmont because cars have more chances to see cyclists sooner. At night, lights are an absolute necessity; not only do the cars need to see you, you need to see the holes in the road.

Where You Ride Matters

Even though cyclists care about safety, they don’t always work with accurate

information. For example, riding on the sidewalk is not particularly safe compared to riding correctly in the street. A 1994 study showed that cyclists have 30 percent more accidents at sidewalk intersections than on roadways or shared-use paths.

A bicyclist who is riding at 15 mph alongside 35 mph traffic will hit cars with an impact equal to 20 mph; a bicyclist riding into 35 mph traffic at 15 mph will hit with a 50 mph impact.

From the point of view of pedestrians, even if the cyclist gets the worst end of a crash, if the cyclist weren’t on the sidewalk or crosswalk in the first place, there’d be no crash at all.

Riding into traffic is dangerous. It may be comforting to keep an eye on all the cars that are approaching you, but in fact it is less safe. It increases your closing speed with traffic.

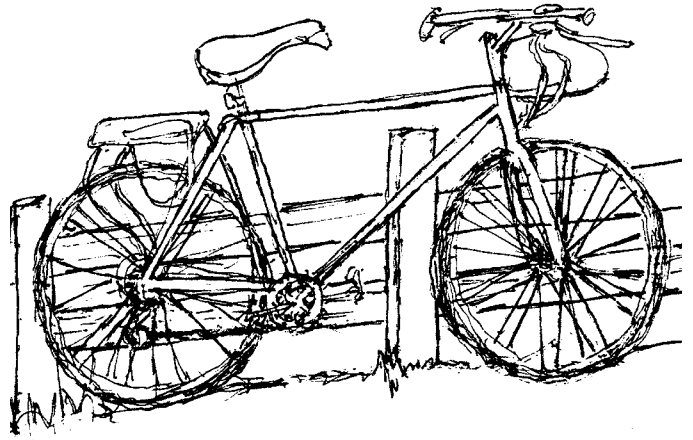
A bicyclist who is riding at 15 mph alongside 35 mph traffic will hit cars with an impact equal to 20 mph; a bicyclist riding into 35 mph traffic at 15 mph will hit with a 50 mph impact. Just to give some perspective on what that means, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration calculates that a pedestrian hit at 20 mph has a 95 percent chance of surviving the crash; a pedestrian hit at 50 mph has less than a one percent chance of leaving the scene alive.

Riding against traffic also reduces the window of time the driver has to see and react to the bicycle, and if there is a crash, it will be worse. Drivers entering the road are not looking for wrong-way traffic. Consider traffic pulling into the street; drivers will look to the left in the near lane, and to the right in the far lane. If a cyclist is not positioned where the driver is looking, that bicyclist is as good as invisible. Typical driver behavior compounds this hazard, because many cars fail to come to a full stop at the stop line, reducing everyone's time to see and react.

Middle-of-the Road Cycling is Safer

Even when a cyclist rides with the traffic, that cyclist's fear of collisions can still cause unsafe mistakes. These errors are not usually viewed as rude, but they are definitely not safe. When cyclists ride as far as possible from the traffic (and some drivers think it is rude to do otherwise), the cyclist ends up hugging the curb, riding in the trash, sand, and gravel, or riding next to parked cars which may open their doors into the cyclist. Riding close to the curb also makes it harder for side traffic to see you. None of this is safe.

It's important for drivers to understand that when a cyclist is "in the middle of the road," there is usually a good reason. Cyclists are also legally entitled to ride far from the curb when there is a good reason. The "door zone" along parked cars is about as wide as a minimum standard bike lane (5 feet); if someone rides just outside a marked bike lane, it may be for their own safety.



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Riding on the Right Takes Care

Bicycles are allowed to pass stopped traffic on the right, although some drivers aren't aware that this practice is legal and take offense. Riding on the right does require some care, though. Passengers sometimes exit cars on the right, and bicyclists can get "doored" when a car door is opened in their path. Some drivers may stop and open up a gap to allow other traffic to cross the lane—to leave a driveway, for example. That other traffic may not see or expect a cyclist.

A third problem occurs near intersections. When a cyclist rides through an intersection alongside a car that intends to turn right, that car may not have seen the cyclist appear from the right rear, and may turn right into the cyclist. This goes double for trucks; they have bigger blind spots, and there is a greater risk of being run over instead of knocked over.

Sidewalk Bike Routes are Perilous, Slow

Sidewalks and crosswalks are trickier. Strictly speaking, it's illegal to ride your bicycle in a business district in many towns including Boston, Cambridge, Somerville, Arlington, Belmont, and Lexington. How vigorously that law is enforced depends on the town and on how much attention a cyclist draws.

Outside of business districts, sidewalk riding is allowed, but it is not safe unless the cyclist pauses at every driveway and cross street and generally rides slowly. Drivers entering the road from side streets do not expect fast-moving traffic on sidewalks and do not look for it.

Sites for Bikes

<http://www.massbike.org/bikelaw/>
Massachusetts bike law, with pointers to other states' and nations' laws.

<http://bikingrules.org/>
Concise, catchy, correct collection of rules for biking in NYC. They would work here, too.

<http://www.boingboing.net/2008/03/27/brilliant-cycling-aw.html>
A "brilliant cycling awareness safety video."

<http://commuteorlando.com/wordpress/2009/08/13/door-zone-video/>
A video, demonstrating how large the "door zone" actually is.

http://www.metroplanorlando.com/site/upload/documents/Bicyclist_Crash_Study_OrlandoArea.pdf
Orlando area bicyclist crash study.

<http://www.metroplanorlando.com/site/upload/documents/10ThingsAboutBicycling.pdf>
(Florida-specific, but Florida follows the Uniform Vehicle Code) 10 things motorists should know about bicycling.

http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2009/08/07/bostons_unruly_riders/
http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2009/07/08/bay_state8217s_scorn_for_seat_belts_unrivaled/
Two *Boston Globe* articles on rude cyclists and seat-belt-eschewing drivers.

To ride safely on a sidewalk, cyclists have to behave as if they were pedestrians. If pedestrians are forced to give way for a cyclist, even a cyclist riding "like a pedestrian," that behavior is not just rude, it is also a traffic infraction. That said, sidewalks can be plenty convenient—for passing under the railroad tracks at the Lions Club, or getting over the railroad tracks at Clark Street, or reaching Fresh Pond Mall from Alewife—and if we bicyclists want to keep using the convenient ones, we probably shouldn't be jerks about it.

There are two types of crosswalks for cyclists: the ones that you ride in, and the ones that you cross as traffic. All vehicles should stop for pedestrians in the crosswalk. Not stopping is both illegal and unsafe for pedestrians. It may appear that there is plenty of room for a bicycle to pass either in front of or behind a pedestrian, but this behavior runs the risk of inducing a car into following the bicycle.

Imagine you are driving a car, overtaking a cyclist approaching a crosswalk. Where is your attention focussed? On the cyclist! You've been watching him move through traffic, and he's wearing bright clothing to ensure that he'll be visible and safe. It catches your eye, just as intended, and diverts your attention away from the pedestrians in the crosswalk.

Cyclists riding on a sidewalk will cross some streets on crosswalks. If you're riding, you're not a pedestrian, and you don't get the same rights as a pedestrian. Drivers are not looking for fast-moving bikes in the crosswalk; it makes sense to pause and look before entering. If there are pedestrians in the crosswalk, bicyclists must yield to them, just like everywhere else.

Bike Paths Have Special Rules

Intersections between bike paths and streets come in a variety of configurations. In some intersections, there is only a stop sign on the path and a crosswalk in the street. For vehicles (i.e., bicycles), that set-up is a two-way stop even though there is also a crosswalk. A cyclist must at least pause because the street traffic may see only a small sign and a crosswalk and is not prepared for a bike to suddenly appear in that crosswalk. When the crosswalk has a button-activated signal, it's intended that pedestrians

and cyclists wait for the cross traffic to either clear or stop for the light.

In a few cases the path is interrupted by a street—as happens when the Minuteman Bikeway reaches Arlington Center—and bikes must negotiate sidewalks and/or streets. In Arlington Center, the more aggressive/impatient cyclists use the street while others ride on the sidewalk, even though there are signs that state that this practice is illegal. The intersection

seems to work, but given that hundreds of cyclists get a pass on the sidewalk law every day, it seems like a good idea for cyclists to take special care to give way to all pedestrians, ride moderately on the sidewalk, and not abuse the de facto favor.

David Chase is a Director of the Belmont Citizens Forum.

Bike Path Updates

Alewife to Brighton Street Shared-Use Path Goes Out to Bid

On July 18, the Massachusetts Highway Department advertised for bids for construction of the Davis Square to Alewife Station to Brighton Street bike path. The project, estimated to cost \$5 million, entails reconstructing and improving the existing Linear Park connecting Davis Square to Alewife and constructing a new, paved bike path from Alewife to Brighton Street in Belmont. This new section will run along the southern edge of the Alewife Brook Reservation where the current dirt path is located.

The project involves paving a 12-foot-wide bike path, preparing a soft path alongside it, landscaping areas near the path, and constructing a bridge that will cross Alewife Brook. The bridge will be located just north of the Alewife garage and across from the eastern end of the Minuteman Trail. The bridge will serve as the gateway to the Alewife Reservation and mark the start of the Alewife to Brighton Street path.

Bids are due by September 15, and work on the path could begin this fall. The Massachusetts Highway Department will manage the project, then transfer responsibility for the path to the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) once construction is complete.

Bikes Belong Awards Grant to BCF, Friends of the Belmont Community Path

The Belmont Citizens Forum and Friends of the Belmont Community Path have been awarded a grant from Bikes Belong, a national coalition sponsored by the U.S. bicycle industry with the goal of putting more people on bicycles more often. The grant is for \$10,000 to provide matching funds for design of the Belmont Community Path, which would extend the proposed community path from Brighton Street to Belmont Center.

The Citizens Forum is in the process of preparing an application to the Massachusetts DCR Recreational Trails Grant Program to fund initial design work. The Bikes Belong grant will provide about half of the matching funds required for the DCR grant. Receipt of the grant from Bikes Belong is among the first of many steps to design and build a shared-use path in Belmont. The Belmont Citizens Forum and Friends of the Belmont Community Path thank Sue Bass for putting in the major part of the effort to prepare this grant application.

— John Dieckmann is a Director of the Belmont Citizens Forum.

Volunteers Build Western Greenway Boardwalk

By Dan Lech

A new 560-foot boardwalk is under construction that will link the Beaver Brook North Reservation in Belmont to the Lot 1 property in Lexington, providing a key link in the Western Greenway chain. (See “Western Greenway Trail Grows Longer,” Belmont Citizens Forum Newsletter, July/August 2009.) Unlike the boardwalk constructed last year at Rock Meadow, this project is located in wetlands which are more than 150 yards from the nearest vehicle access. That distance makes the work much more difficult.

On August 1 when I paid a visit to the worksite it was humid and warm and the ground was saturated from heavy rains that fell the night before. Fifteen men and boys were hauling beams down muddy paths, cutting planks, and

assembling the boardwalk with power tools. I spoke with Mike Tabczynski of the New England Mountain Bike Association, the coordinator of this all-volunteer project.

Now that you have three days of construction completed, how are things going? Are you on schedule?

We’re a bit behind schedule due to poor working conditions caused by excessive rain, like flooded trails and mosquitoes, and because we are building a new trail in one of the wildest places in the region. We’ll probably have to schedule a sixth work day this fall to complete the project.

You mentioned that this was the most difficult project of this type that you’ve



DAN LECH

The boardwalk takes shape.

attempted. Are there specific difficulties that this area poses or is it just the sheer magnitude of it?

Obviously sheer magnitude is a factor, and also the remoteness of the trail location. This is the second largest boardwalk ever built by volunteers in Lexington [and] is also the farthest from any street, making the logistics of getting tools, materials, and people to the worksite difficult. The trail construction portions present similar difficulties because neither the Metropolitan Parkway or Walnut Street ends [of the trail] has any place to park a vehicle carrying tools and workers.

I noticed the volunteers were male and split pretty evenly between the more mature contingent and the younger set. Were the young guys family members, high school students getting community service credits, or a combination?

Almost all of the young folks are Lexington or Waldorf High School students getting community service credit. A few of the kids are with a parent, but most of the family contingents are the other way around. The parent needs to drop off the high-schooler for community service, decides to stay and help a while, then ends up addicted. We depend on a diverse set of volunteers, and the day you were there [they] happened to be predominantly male. Usually... almost half [of the volunteers are] women helping.

When will the path from Concord Avenue to the boardwalk be cleared?



DAN LECH

Volunteers carry supplies to the work site.

It has been partially cleared toward the Parkway and on August 22 I expect clearing in the opposite direction toward Walnut Street will get started. The priority is to finish the boardwalk, so the final ground work on the connecting trails won't be done until September.

Volunteers are still needed on Saturday, September 26 from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Report to Metropolitan Parkway South at 480 Trapelo Road across from Forest Street in Lexington and follow the signs to trail work parking. Contact 781-862-0500 x240, landstewards@ci.lexington.ma.us for more information.

Dan Lech is a 10-year Belmont resident, wine professional, and musician who is attempting to think globally and act locally.

Letters to the Editor

Waverley Woods Deserves Recognition

To the Editor:

I am writing in reply to David Chase's article in your July/August *Newsletter*. In "McLean Developer Abandons Project," the author says that Olmsted Drive is "currently a road to nowhere."

That is neither factually nor rhetorically correct. Olmsted Drive is the address for 40 families living in Waverley Woods, who are

Belmont citizens just like you and me. Their existence and the achievement of building these 40 comfortable and attractive rental units—the first new ones in Belmont in many years—deserve to be recognized by your organization.

Thank you,
Judie Feins
Chair, Belmont Housing Trust



MEG MUCKENHOUT

Waverley Woods

Bike Path Would Serve Common Good

To the Editor:

I am very much in favor of the bike path. I have tried to think of a dramatic reason to give you to support this project, similar in importance as a resident saying, "I don't want the path near my property." But I can't. I can only tell you my story.

I am a Belmont resident, a senior citizen and property owner. I vote for initiatives that support schools, pave the roads and generally think that the hyper-budget-minded residents are short sighted, pennywise and pound foolish. The best way to support property values is to have property in a community in which people want to reside. Further, I believe that education is national defense.

I am 68 years old and by my calculations will have to work for many more years. My business is demanding—meeting its challenges both physical and mental. My exercise routine is, as my wife describes it, "compulsive." Biking is part of that routine. If it were not for the Minuteman Path leading to Concord, etc., I would have probably been in a minor bike-vehicle accident which at my age would have been serious.

Are there many seniors like me—probably not. But there are many people I see on the path in Arlington walking with their families, biking to work, taking in nature and who are generally pleased to be there. So this is the soft reason and the tie I hope makes sense; the quality of life, property values and economic viability are directly related to communities in which people are "pleased to be there." Not dramatic, but in the interest of the common good, to which I hope you all respond.

Thank you and I have to say that whether I agree or disagree with you all, I respect your time and effort.

Dan Kagan
27 Alma Ave
Belmont



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Town Needs Regional Bike Connections

To the Editor:

I loved the Alewife article in the Belmont Citizens Forum *Newsletter*. ("Getting to Alewife Station Isn't Easy, Belmont Citizens Forum July/August 2009).

I think this helps us understand that Waverley access to train and bus is quickly becoming dear.

Because of the existing major highway connection to Alewife, and the desire to limit car commuters to Waverley, I am wondering if we could encourage seasonal regional bicycling to Waverley for train and bus connections into Harvard Square and Boston.

We might even have a head start with Wheelworks being there.... Maybe an organized and secure bicycle lot? This might also help retain the "village" scale of Waverley. Imagine cafes for train and bus waiting...

Cheers,
Bob Kennedy
Town Meeting Member, Precinct 3

Environmental Events

Climate Change, Health Consequences, and Healthy Solutions

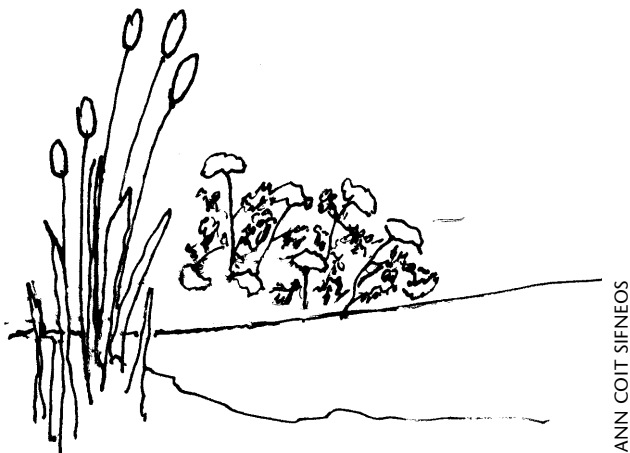
Thursday, September 17, 7-9 p.m.

Dr. Paul Epstein, Associate Director of the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School, will speak on climate change. Epstein has worked with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and is coordinating an international project titled "Climate Change Futures: Health, Ecological and Economic Dimensions." Information: bob.andrews3@verizon.net. *First Parish in Concord, 20 Lexington Road, Concord.*

World Water Monitoring Day™

Friday, September 18

World Water Monitoring Day™ (WWMD) is an international education and outreach program that builds public awareness and involvement in protecting water resources around the world by engaging citizens to conduct basic monitoring of their local water bodies. An easy-to-use test kit enables everyone from children to adults to sample local water bodies. Results are shared with communities around the globe through the WWMD web site. Information: www.worldwatermonitoringday.org, 703-535-5264, wwmd@wef.org.



Nature Walks in Arlington's Great Meadows

Saturday, September 19 and October 17, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Join the Friends of Arlington's Great Meadows and explore the botany and wildlife along the Great Meadows' uplands and wetlands boardwalk. Information: www.FoAGM.org, 781-646-4965, donaldbmiller@comcast.net. *Golden Living Center, 840 Emerson Gardens Road, Lexington, right rear parking lot.*

Climate Action Plan Presentation

Monday, September 21, Time TBA

Sustainable Belmont will present a revised draft of the Climate Action Plan to the Belmont Board of Selectmen for their consideration for adoption. Information: sustainablebelmont@gmail.com, www.sustainablebelmont.net. *Selectmens' Room, Belmont Town Hall, Belmont.*

The Greening of Southie

Wednesday, September 23, 7-9 p.m.

The Lexington Global Warming Action Committee hosts a screening of "The Greening of Southie," a film about green architecture which chronicles the design and construction of the Macallen Building, an 11-story condominium development, the first such residence in Boston to attain a LEED rating. But Boston's steel-toed union workers aren't sure they like it. And when things on the building start to go wrong, the young developer has to keep the project from unraveling. Yet among the I-beams and brickwork emerges a small cadre of unlikely environmentalists who come to connect their work with the future of their children. Information: www.lexgwac.org, info@lexgwac.org. *Cary Memorial Library, 1874 Massachusetts Ave, Lexington.*

Beaver Brook North Reservation Walk

Saturday, September 26, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Join the Waltham Land Trust and the Belmont Citizens Forum for a walk through Beaver Brook North Reservation, formerly the Metropolitan State Hospital land. Birders Jason Forbes and Florence DiTirro will help identify various birds along the trail. The walk will be followed by a pot luck picnic



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in joint celebration of both the Belmont Citizens Forum's and the Waltham Land Trust's 10th year anniversary! Bring a potluck dish to share and chairs and/or blankets to enjoy your lunch. The Belmont Citizens Forum and the Waltham Land Trust will provide plates, cups, utensils, and water. Information: www.walthamlandtrust.org, 781-893-3355, chutchison@walthamlandtrust.org. *Elsie Turner Field parking lot, 381 Trapelo Road, Waltham.*

Berries and Bushes

Sunday, September 27, 1-3 p.m.

Learn to identify native berry-bearing plants found in shrub beds on the east side of the Fresh Pond Reservoir and use a "Berry Finder" guide to identify these plants. Guides provided, or available for purchase for \$5. Registration required. Information: friendsoffreshpond.org, 617-349-6489, friendsoffreshpond@yahoo.com. *Ranger Station, Walter J Sullivan Water Purification Facility, 250 Fresh Pond Parkway, Cambridge.*

An Evening Walk in the Upper Cambridge Watershed

Monday, September 28, 5-7 p.m.

Chip Norton, Cambridge Watershed Manager, will give a tour of Cambridge-owned land on the borders of Waltham, Lexington, and Lincoln. Walk through woodlands and fields, and view a pond

and several streams. A carpool from the Water Department parking lot leaves promptly at 5 p.m. Long pants and shoes or boots are recommended. Registration required. Information: friendsoffreshpond.org, 617-349-6489, friendsoffreshpond@yahoo.com. *Walter J Sullivan Water Purification Facility, 250 Fresh Pond Parkway, Cambridge.*

Mount Auburn Trees

Saturday, October 3, 9:30-11 a.m.

Join an instructor from Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary on a walk to study the native trees at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge. Look at the panorama of changing colors their leaves create, examine their trunks and fruits, and discuss their role in history. Fee \$12 Mass Audubon members, \$15 nonmembers. Registration required. Information: www.massaudubon.org, 617-489-5050, habitat@massaudubon.org. *Main parking lot, Mount Auburn Cemetery, 580 Mount Auburn Street, Cambridge.*

Energy Savings Fair

Sunday, October 4, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

Save on your energy bills while you help the environment. Experienced vendors and other organizations will provide the information on efficient heating systems, solar systems, lighting, home energy audits, tax rebates, and more. Information: www.lexgwac.org, info@lexgwac.org. *Lexington Depot, 13 Depot Square, Lexington.*

River Cleanup

Sunday, October 4, 1-3 p.m.

The Mystic River Watershed Association is holding a river cleanup in collaboration with Roots & Shoots New England and Earthwatch. Information: mysticriver.org, 781-316-3438, beth@mysticriver.org. *Location TBA.*

Sustainable Belmont Meeting Book

Discussion: *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral*

Wednesday, October 7, 7-9 p.m.

This meeting will be devoted to an adult book discussion of *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* by Barbara Kingsolver. Cosponsored by One Book, One Belmont. Held in the Assembly Room of the Belmont Public Library. Information:

sustainablebelmont@gmail.com, www.belmont.lib.ma.us. Assembly Room at the Belmont Public Library, 330 Concord Avenue, Belmont.

Upper Vine Brook Watershed Walk

Saturday, October 10, 2-4:30 p.m.

Join the Citizens for Lexington Conservation to explore the upper reaches of Vine Brook, and enjoy the fall colors of a red maple swamp. Wear boots as conditions may be wet. Information: Keith Ohmart, 781-862-6216. *Highland Avenue and Washington Street, Lexington.*

Explore the Western Greenway

Saturday, October 24, 8-11 a.m.

Did you know there are over 1,000 acres of interconnected green space in Belmont, Lexington, and Waltham? Fall is a wonderful season to experience the local nature of New England, so join Habitat Wildlife Sanctuary staff for a four-mile hike through part of the Western Greenway starting at Habitat and ending at the new Beaver Brook North Reservation. Return transportation provided. Fee \$16 Mass Audubon members, \$20 nonmembers. Information: www.massaudubon.org, 617-489-5050, habitat@massaudubon.org, www.massaudubon.org. *Habitat, 10 Juniper Road, Belmont.*
Regional Energy Revolution Rally,
International Day of Climate Action

Saturday, October 24, 2-4 p.m.

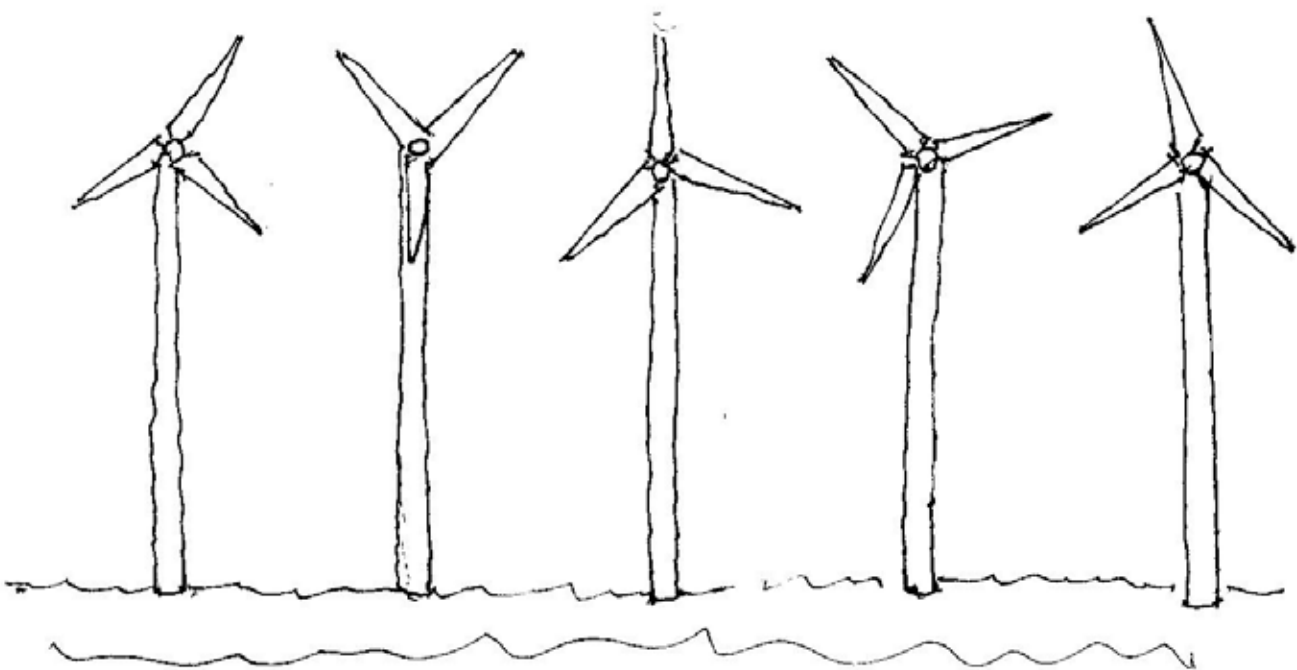
This rally sponsored by the Global Warming Education Network is part of the International Day of Climate Action spearheaded by Bill McKibben's www.350.org. Citizens around the world will show their support for a strong climate treaty to be negotiated at the United Nations talks in Copenhagen in December 2009. Information: www.gwenet.org/October.24.htm, 781-861-1400, info@gwenet.org. *174 Liberty Street, Minute Man National Historical Park, Concord.*

Energy Efficient Home Building with Carter Scott

Monday, October 26, 7-9 p.m.

Learn more about energy efficient home building with Carter Scott, president of Transformations, Inc., a residential development and building company which specializes in sustainable development and green building. Transformations has built seven Near Zero Energy Homes (with HERS Indices under 40) at Coppersmith Way and Transformations had three of the "Top Ten Scoring Energy Star Homes" in Massachusetts. Information: www.lexgwac.org, info@lexgwac.org. *Cary Memorial Library, 1874 Massachusetts Ave, Lexington.*

Belmont Citizens Forum 10th Anniversary Celebration



Sunday, November 1, 7:30 p.m.

Look for your invitation in the mail, or e-mail info@belmontcitizensforum.org if you'd like to attend.

"Laugh So We Don't Cry": an evening with Jimmy Tingle

Friday, November 6, time TBA.

Support the Waltham Land Trust's efforts to preserve open space. Free soft drinks, food and alcohol available for purchase. Information: www.walthamlandtrust.org, 781-893-3355, chutchison@walthamlandtrust.org. American Legion Waltham Post 156, 215 Waverley Oaks Road, Waltham.



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

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250

Name

Address

Phone/E-mail

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

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

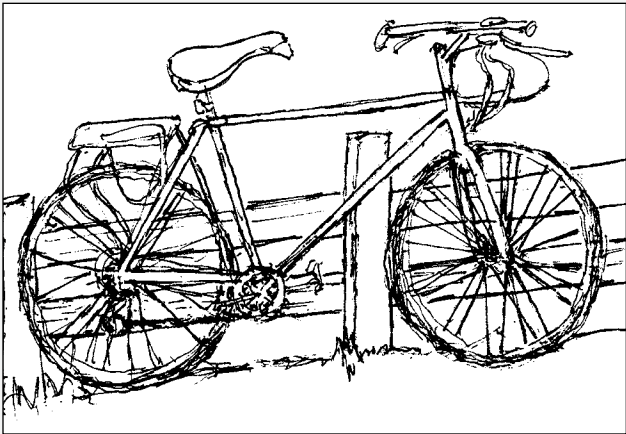
Thank you.

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September/October 2009

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