



Belmont Citizens Forum

Selectman Candidates Answer BCF Questions

Belmont Annual Town Election to be Held Tuesday, April 2

Compiled by Mary Bradley

Each year the Belmont Citizens Forum asks candidates for selectman about issues the town will likely face in the next three years. Below are candidates Jessie Bennett, Roy Epstein, and Timothy Flood's unedited replies to our questions about traffic, the environment, development, and other topics. Each candidate was limited to 800 words total.

1. In response to McLean's proposal to rezone parts of its former campus for housing, school, and R&D use, what would you recommend?

Bennett: McLean's proposed zoning changes do not meet the goals of Belmont's Housing Production plan. With so little development space left in town, we must maximize the number of units that meet our affordability guidelines, particularly for seniors. The zoning approved 20 years ago for a senior continuum of care facility was in response to a need, and we are nowhere near resolving that need. Any development in that zone should provide options for older residents to downsize and stay in town within their means.

Epstein: I support new housing and a school at McLean, but await more information on the proposed R&D use. Any development must meet existing affordable housing set-asides. Generating additional traffic onto Mill Street is a concern. The Memorandum of Understanding between Belmont and McLean guides the Planning Board process. We need to balance our needs for affordable housing, more units for seniors, and more tax revenue.

Flood: Although the current McLean proposal for townhomes does not address current Belmont housing shortfalls, such as senior housing and affordable housing options, our town would benefit from the tax revenue growth. I would recommend that we continue to discuss options and plans with the project developer to create a more balanced compromise.

2. What steps would you take to ensure that the design and construction of the Community Path proceed efficiently?

Bennett: By the time this appears, we will have settled the question of the route between Brighton Street and Belmont Center, and the Community Path Project Committee (CPPC) will be moving on to the next stage. We have reached this stage after a tremendous amount of work by many members of our community, and we must maintain our focus on the process. We are on a timeline that would allow us to compete for the next round of funding, and delays would risk losing that funding.

Undoubtedly, we will encounter complications during the design process. We may find problems with right of way or clearances or other design constraints that require rethinking, but we will

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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.

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not know what they are until we get into the detailed design.

Epstein: As a cyclist and member of the Community Path Project Committee (CPPC), I strongly support this project. The path will provide a safe route for bikes and kids going to school, reduce automobile traffic, and create new recreation and commuting opportunities. But to do that we must design a path that is safe, buildable, and affordable. Belmont is responsible for all design costs plus any construction costs that the state will not reimburse. We need a process for the path that ensures success with the fixed budget available.

Belmont is responsible for acquiring the needed right of way. For Phase 1a, the Alexander Avenue tunnel, the School Department must decide whether to allow the extension of the path to Concord Avenue. For Phase 1b, Brighton Street to the Clark Street bridge, we must acquire MBTA and perhaps other easements. This should be addressed immediately so we know the cost of a feasible route.

Examples of other requirements that must be addressed early in the process include: (1) abutter screening if a northern route; (2) safety engineering for crossing Brighton Street; (3) coordinated planning with the Concord Avenue Light Department site; (4) MBTA track and path separation; (5) MBTA track access from Alexander Avenue and Brighton Street; (6) MBTA conditions for using the Belmont Center station area and Leonard Street bridge; and (7) fire-, ambulance-, and police-path access. Each issue affects the design budget and must be evaluated for construction costs that the state may not reimburse. This is a complicated and unique project. We need an efficient bidding process that allows us and the bidders to understand all of the costs we may face. We can't afford surprises late in the game.

I'm committed to working with the CPPC, the selectmen, and the town to build a safe and affordable path through Belmont. I would like to be one of the first to ride my bike to Northampton!

Flood: The Belmont Community Path Implementation Advisory Committee's efforts to

shepherd the Community Path Project have been tremendous. I believe the most efficient design allows safe use of the path over its length. Though, under the current design, I am concerned that the railroad crossing at Brighton Street continues to pose a safety risk to users, and further evaluation is needed to consider additional options for this crossing, including rerouting around existing buildings or expropriating land to accommodate a safe path. Progressing into construction without a solution to this safety concern will not allow the construction to proceed efficiently.

3. What changes should the town require to use less energy and be more resilient to global warming and increased flooding?

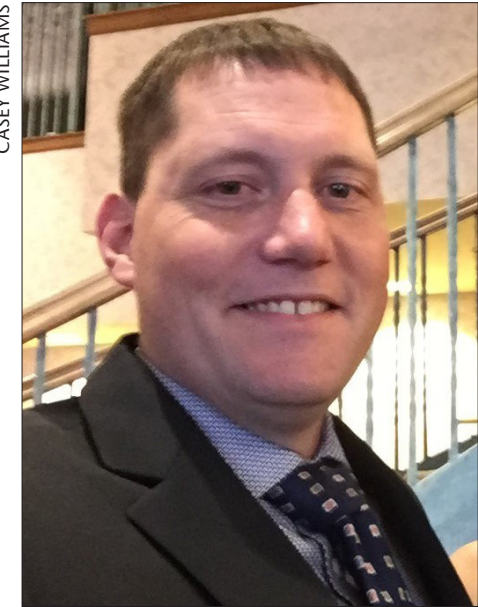
Bennett: The Energy Committee's draft roadmap to strategic electrification of the largest causes of carbon emissions—transportation by car and home heating—provides us with a plan to meet our Climate Action goals. Partnerships between the town and community groups like Belmont Goes Solar and Belmont Drives Electric are vital to making this plan a reality.

The new 7-12 school achieved zero net energy designation and was designed to withstand any flooding from Clay Pit Pond. We must apply this same rigor to any future building projects. We should preserve our open spaces and incorporate resilient design in our streetscapes, including rain gardens, green buffer zones, and other measures that can alleviate the impacts of major storm events.

Epstein: As a Light Board Advisory Committee member, I worked on and supported our revised energy supply policy that will increase Belmont Light reliance on renewable sources. Belmont Light should continue rapid deployment of new smart street lights that use less power. I support battery energy storage at the incinerator site. The site could also house a solar farm equal to all the rooftop solar in Belmont.

Belmont should continue to upgrade heating, cooling, and lighting systems in town buildings. The new 7-12 school is a model for zero net energy design.

CASEY WILLIAMS



Timothy Flood

Electric vehicles are the future for cars. My new plug-in hybrid is the best car I've ever owned. Heat pumps, which use electricity instead of natural gas or oil for home heating, could make a big difference as they replace existing systems. Let's continue exploring incentives to get people to adopt better technologies faster.

Ability to handle severe rain events that impact Clay Pit Pond and the sewer system is a priority. The design for the new school must be flood-proof.

Flood: Belmont residents have taken great strides to use renewable energy, though I do not believe we are actively moving toward using less energy. The Belmont Goes Solar and Belmont Drives Electric are primary examples of initial success. These cannot be one-time-only programs and need to grow and update with the community. For example, I believe additional buy-back valuation negotiation is needed with Belmont Light to incentivize more Belmont residents to install solar on their homes and businesses given the high upfront costs. Further incentives are needed to encourage residents to reduce energy use, such as completing home-energy assessments, improving home insulation and efficiency, and replacing aging heating and cooling systems with heat pumps. Further, I would push for many town vehicles to be upgraded to hybrids or electric vehicles.

4. What do you think is a reasonable goal and timetable for reducing pollution in Belmont's streams and ponds so they can support recreation like boating and swimming? Do you think a stormwater fee would help?

Bennett: We can make big strides in cleaning up our waterways, but there are grave concerns with disturbing the contaminants at the bottom of Clay Pit Pond. We will have to see where environmental technology takes us in the coming years, but I can't envision a swimming hole there any time soon. But we can improve conditions in Little Pond and our other waterways through better stormwater management.

The town must continue to aggressively identify illegal storm drain connections and fix the problems, including damaged lateral sewer lines to homes that are leaking sewage into storm drains. A stormwater fee, like the one recently imposed in Braintree, could have a very small impact on ratepayers and go a long way towards helping pay for the remediation work being done by the Office of Community Development to address these issues.

One of the primary charges of the Stormwater Management Program is public education and outreach, but the town has not been visibly engaged with these activities in recent years. We should be doing more outreach to encourage property owners to limit the use of pesticides

Roy Epstein



RYUJI SUZUKI, BEAUPIX STUDIO

and fertilizers and to discourage dumping in storm drains.

Epstein: The town will meet the boating water quality standard by 2022, as required by the EPA. But actual boating and swimming would entail costs such as lifeguards, policing, and sanitation that are hard to support. A stormwater utility fee should be developed in a larger discussion of DEP and EPA requirements for stormwater management.

Flood: Belmont must work with surrounding communities to improve pollution in our waterways. Belmont should show our commitment to this issue by correcting abandoned or broken stormwater system connections and investing in green infrastructure such as porous pavement on streets and driveways adjacent to streams and ponds. We may be able to achieve an economy of forces with neighboring communities to collectively improve pollution, but a stormwater fee, common throughout the country, would allow our community to create positive change and adapt to expected stricter future state or federal regulations.

5. Does Belmont have enough professional planners to guide it through current regional development pressure?

Bennett: The Office of Community Development is understaffed. To fill the gap, we have hired consultants as needed to supplement our in-house expertise. We also have a strong Planning Board with experience in multiple areas, including open space, facilities, and development. Although I believe the town doesn't have enough planners, we are ahead of where we were a few years ago. To bridge the gap for more complicated projects and reduce our costs, the town can condition approval for larger projects on a developer-paid independent planner conducting a review.

Epstein: An additional position to relieve the load on the current planning staff should be discussed with Community Development and the Planning Board. Permitting fees could recover at least some of the cost.

Flood: Belmont's five-person volunteer Planning Board and senior and staff planners put forth an incredible effort to develop an Adult Use Marijuana By-Law and the South Pleasant Street Overlay District, which was overwhelmingly supported by Town Meeting in Fall 2018; however, these efforts limit the Board's ability to hear and respond to open cases. I believe we need to better support our town planners. Having an additional professional planner would help alleviate some of this pressure.

6. Describe your vision for Belmont 20 years from now.

Bennett: My vision of Belmont in 20 years is of a town with safe walking and biking routes, where the majority of private vehicles as well as our town vehicle fleet will be hybrid or electric. Distributed solar will power our homes, municipal buildings, and businesses, and heat-pump technology will be well on the way to replacing all older oil and natural-gas powered systems. Our municipal utilities will be models for other communities to meet their environmental goals.

The graduating class of Belmont High will have attended school in classrooms with the right student-teacher ratios from Pre-K through 12th grade. They will have had access to 21st-century teaching methods and spaces for learning in buildings fully accessible to students with disabilities.

Our open spaces will remain a point of pride and a respite from the buzz of the urban sphere. A vibrant local arts scene will have sprung from our active community organizations, our new library, and our schools. Our successful commercial districts will provide a mix of shopping, retail, and entertainment options, making Belmont not only a town of homes, but also a place to enjoy life in all its stages.

Epstein: In 2039 our schools remain outstanding and the roads and sidewalks are finally paved. Electric vehicles are everywhere. People are walking and biking more. The Fitchburg line has much more frequent service, and there is much less cut-through traffic.



Jessie Bennett

We have a smaller carbon footprint because homeowners switched to heating with heat pumps instead of oil and gas. We are proud of the condition of our parks, town buildings, library, and hockey rink. Seniors have attractive new housing options on South Pleasant Street. The Purecoat property on Hittinger Street is redeveloped.

Belmont's pension obligation is paid off, making funds available to restore school and town services that were cut in the previous 40 years.

I hope to be running a brewpub in Cushing Square!

Belmont must remain a vibrant and diverse community with creative, committed residents in all walks of life.

Flood: In 20 years, I would like to see Belmont in a financially robust position, able to anticipate and react to issues before they become critical. Though we cannot predict the future, concerns of today likely will not be the concerns of tomorrow. It is imperative that our current leaders make sound financial decisions now so that our future leaders have the resources to study, act upon, and resolve emerging issues to meet the town's needs.

Mary Bradley is co-editor of the Belmont Citizens Forum Newsletter.

Eight Projects Recommended for Community Preservation Funds

By David Kane, Stephen Pinkerton, and Margaret Velie

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a state law that helps towns keep their character and quality of life by providing funds to preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities (see Table 1). Belmont adopted the CPA in 2010.

Community preservation money is raised locally through a 1.5 percent surcharge (3 percent is the maximum) on property taxes, which is then partially matched by the state. In the last few years, Belmont has generated about \$1.1 million per year locally and has received about \$200,000 per year from the state.

The town's Community Preservation Committee (CPC) is charged with recommending projects for funding to Town Meeting. The yearly application process begins with preliminary applications in late September. Final applications are due around the first of December. Each year the committee holds a public meeting in mid-September to explain the CPA process and another in November where applicants present their projects to the public. May's annual Town Meeting will be the seventh to consider CPA projects. To date Town Meeting has appropriated about \$7 million to 40 projects. You may have noticed work done last year on a few projects: Pequotsette

Park playground was renovated in the summer and fall, the tennis courts at Grove Street Park were renovated, the cupola at the 1853 William Flagg Homer house is being restored, and at Clay Pit Pond Park, two projects are continuing—renovating the walking path and restoring the Veterans Memorial. The Veterans Memorial is also being enlarged and enhanced with private funds.

This year the CPC received eight applications, and all eight are being recommended to Town Meeting for appropriation of CPA funds. There were no Community Housing applications this year, so 10 percent of Belmont's CPA revenues for the year will be reserved for future Community Housing projects.

Open Space

Rock Meadow Habitat Preservation

Rock Meadow is 70 acres of permanently protected conservation land open to the general public. Belmont has owned Rock Meadow since 1968, with the Conservation Commission managing the meadowland for the town. The land was farmed by McLean Hospital until World War II and is now the home of Belmont's Victory Gardens.

The Conservation Commission would like to complete \$25,400 worth of non-native and



Landscape restoration at Clay Pit Pond is being considered for CPA funding this year. Construction is currently underway for the Intergenerational Walking Path at the pond, thanks in part to past CPA funding.

noxious weed control to protect and preserve native plant and animal habitats at Rock Meadow. The program targets three invasive plant species: black swallowwort, which is harmful to Monarch butterflies; buckthorn; and Japanese knotweed, all of which threaten to overcome meadow grasslands. The three years of proposed work are a component of the Rock Meadow Conservation Master Plan and will be implemented by a professional land manager.

Outdoor Recreation

Clay Pit Pond Landscape Restoration

The Belmont Conservation Commission has applied for \$20,000 to restore and preserve the historic landscape surrounding Clay Pit Pond. The project calls for removing invasive and non-native plants from the vegetative buffer around the pond to foster restoration of vegetation consistent with the original Loring Underwood parkland design. Bittersweet vine compromises the health of the native plant community and obscures the view of the pond. Buckthorn, euonymus, and catbrier infest the pond's bank. The eradication proposal includes two years of follow-up work to ensure effective

elimination of unwanted plants and regeneration of native species. Restoration of the Clay Pit Pond landscape is an important complement to construction of the Intergenerational Walking Path currently underway.

Community Path Phase 1b (Brighton Street to Clark Street Bridge) Design

The town is seeking \$1 million to design Phase 1b of the Belmont Community Path. The Massachusetts Department of Transportation Project Review Committee has determined that Phases 1a and 1b of the Community Path are eligible for state and federal construction funds if the town can secure a design consultant by July 2020 (two years from the date of eligibility, July 26, 2018). Town Meeting has already approved a CPA project for design funds for Phase 1a (Alexander Avenue underpass).

The Community Path will function as a linear park for pedestrians and bicycles connecting Belmont Center and the Fitchburg Cutoff Path at Brighton Street. The entire Community Path in Belmont consists of three phases: Phase 1a (Alexander Avenue underpass); Phase 1b

Table 1. Guidelines for Community Preservation Act funding

	Open Space	Historic	Recreation	Housing
Acquire	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Create	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Preserve	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Support	No	No	No	Yes
Rehabilitate and/or Restore	Yes, if acquired or created with CPA	Yes	Yes (new)	Yes, if acquired or created with CPA

ADAPTED FROM THE MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

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Strategic Direction Needed for CPA Guidance

By Roger Colton

Some Town Meeting members have expressed concern regarding the overall approach taken to CPA planning in Belmont. Vincent Stanton (Town Meeting member, Precinct 3), for example, believes that CPA decision-making should be more “strategic” in nature.

Stanton observes that Town Meeting is never presented with “the big picture” for how CPA funds are being used. He cites funding for various projects around Clay Pit Pond as one example. Town Meeting has been presented with three separate projects, he notes, involving the intergenerational path, the veterans’ memorial, and, this year, the removal of invasive plants. “They all deal with maintaining and appreciating the beauty of the pond,” he says. But, “if someone would have had the bigger picture in mind from the beginning,” he asks, “would there have been a more efficient way to approach enhancement of the pond?”

Gloria Leipzig, member of the Community Preservation Committee (CPC), agrees with the need for a more “unified vision” for CPA funding. She says, however, that strategic direction should come from the Board of Selectmen or a broader-based community process, such as that which led to the Comprehensive Plan. The role of the CPC is only to determine whether proposed projects meet the criteria for CPA funding. “It is,” she says, “up to Town Meeting to determine whether particular projects are sufficiently important to fund or whether they advance the needs of the community.” Ideally,

TIM TODREAS



Leipzig suggested, the CPC would give Town Meeting more projects than there is money to fund, so Town Meeting would need to exercise its judgment on where CPA money would best go.

Stanton and Leipzig both agree that it is not clear who should set the strategic direction they recommend. Different boards have different pieces of the puzzle with no one overseeing the whole. For example, even if each committee with jurisdiction over the statutory allocations established its own long-term CPA plan (Housing Trust for housing; Conservation Commission/Recreation Commission for open space/recreation; Historic District Commission for historic preservation), those allocations do not account for all of the CPA funding available. Town policymakers, they both agree, should give the CPC (and Town Meeting) some clear strategic direction, without naming which “policymakers” should take on that task.

Roger Colton (Town Meeting member, Precinct 6) authors the biweekly “Community Conversations” column for the Belmont Citizen-Herald and hosts the biweekly podcast of the same name for the Belmont Media Center. He is the co-host of the Belmont Journal, the Belmont Media Center’s weekly show for hyper-local news.

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(Brighton Street to Clark Street Bridge); and Phase 2 connecting Belmont Center to Waverley Square and Waltham.

Payson Park Music Festival Bandstand

The Payson Park Music Festival organizer has requested \$50,000 for the construction of a bandstand at Payson Park. The popular summer concert series has been a staple in the community for the last 27 years, and the bandstand will allow the “show to go on” in the event of inclement weather. There is also the potential to explore other uses for the bandstand in the future.

Town Field Playground Restoration

The Friends of Town Field Playground are requesting \$700,000 out of a total project cost of \$737,600. The cost will be divided over two fiscal years with \$60,000 for final construction drawings and bid documents in FY2020, and the remaining \$640,000 for construction in FY2021.

Last year Town Meeting approved \$25,000 for design drawings for the playground. Since that time and after discussions with the Department of Public Works (DPW), it was determined that the tennis court and basketball court on-site are also in need of restoration and have been added to the design.

Historic Resources

Belmont Police Station Rehabilitation and Restoration

Jointly, the DPW/Belmont Police Department Temporary Building Committee and the Belmont Historic District Commission are seeking \$787,575 to rehabilitate the historic façade of the Georgian Revival police station at the Town Hall complex. The building was designed by H. Thaxter Underwood in 1930. The project will augment the proposed additions and improvements to the police station that Town Meeting approved in May 2018.

Preliminary work, to determine the necessary rehabilitation work (including a conditions assessment study, design of the restoration, cost estimate, and construction documents), has been completed and was funded using CPA Administrative funds (\$21,000).



Left: The current Town Field playground
Above: The proposed design by Waterfield Design Group

LEFT: FRIENDS OF THE BELMONT TOWN FIELD PLAYGROUND; RIGHT: WATERFIELD DESIGN GROUP

Town Hall Complex Slate Roofs Restoration

The Belmont Facilities Department is seeking \$100,000 to rehabilitate and restore the slate roofs and associated internal water damage at Town Hall and the Homer and School Administration Buildings. The budget includes \$25,000 for replacement of missing and damaged slate tiles, copper flashing, rubber boots, and other water runoff components on all three roofs. The remaining \$75,000 is slated for restoration of accumulated water damage to interior ceilings and walls of Town Hall and the school building. Comprehensive drone photo surveys and spot inspections via lift bucket were used to assess roof damage and repair costs. The repairs are considered essential for preservation of Belmont's historically significant municipal core.

Restoration of the Tower Clock at the First Church in Belmont

The First Church is requesting \$66,250 to restore the non-working clock at the top of the

bell tower and to provide safer access to its working gear. In 1889, Town Meeting appropriated \$500 to “place” a clock in the new bell tower being constructed for the church and has since awarded a small annual stipend for maintaining the clock and winding the drive weights. The clock has faces on all four sides of the tower and is prominently located near the Town Hall complex, the train station, Wellington Station, and the post office. The clock operated for 120 years until it stopped running reliably within the last decade.

For more information, see the complete applications on the CPC web page at belmont-ma.gov/community-preservation-committee. For information on the CPA, see the Community Preservation Coalition's website at communitypreservation.org/.

David Kane, Stephen Pinkerton, and Margaret Velie are members of the Community Preservation Committee.



SHEA BRADLEY-HURLEY

The purchase of the clock in the tower of the First Church in Belmont was funded by action of Town Meeting in 1889. Each week the church custodian spent half an hour winding the half-ton clock. Some time in the past decade, the clock stopped working. This year, the restorative work to the movement of the tower clock is one of the projects recommended for funding by the CPC.

Inside Wheelworks with Peter Mooney: Bicycles and Bicycling in Belmont

Interview and photos by Sumner Brown

Peter Mooney is one of three owners of Wheelworks, the bicycle store in Waverley Square. He is also the store manager and a frame builder. Peter bikes to work and was a racer in his youth. We started our interview by walking out of the meticulously clean showroom, past hundreds of shiny new bicycles, clothing, parts, and accessories, back to where Peter has his shop. Once we got to the shop, Peter started talking.

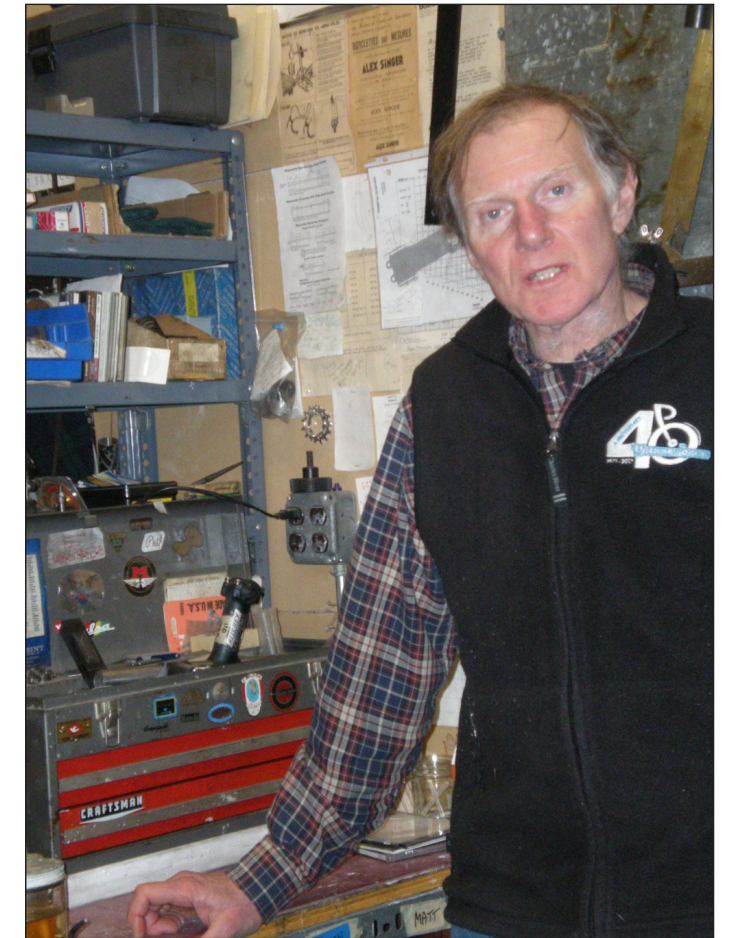
Peter: I have never met a bicycle I do not like. To me, it doesn't matter what sort of bike you ride. Put in your hours riding a bike, any bike, and you are a member of the bicycle riding brotherhood/sisterhood.

The original bicycle boom was between 1880 and 1900. During that time the penny farthings—bicycles with a huge front wheel with pedals directly attached—were replaced with what were called safety bicycles, essentially the format of almost all bicycles now, with the rider sitting between two wheels, and pedals connected to a wheel with a chain. Safety bicycles really were much safer and easier to ride. More and more people started riding. Women started riding. That boom ended with the advent of the automobile.

The urban riding environment can be very intimidating on a bike. The new network of bike lanes with the signage and traffic pattern changes they entail are a great reminder to drivers that they need to expect bikes and share the road. These paths are a great confidence builder for cyclists. That said, don't get overly confident, especially where paths change, transition, or disappear altogether. If your commute distance is too great, or arriving sweaty to work is the problem, consider an electric-assist bike.

Winter commuting is hard on a bicycle. Salt and sand take a toll. A winter program of cleaning and maintenance is important.

During warm weather, we continue to have a bicycle boom here at Wheelworks. In the thick of winter, we joke that we cannot give bicycles away.



Peter Mooney in his shop at Wheelworks

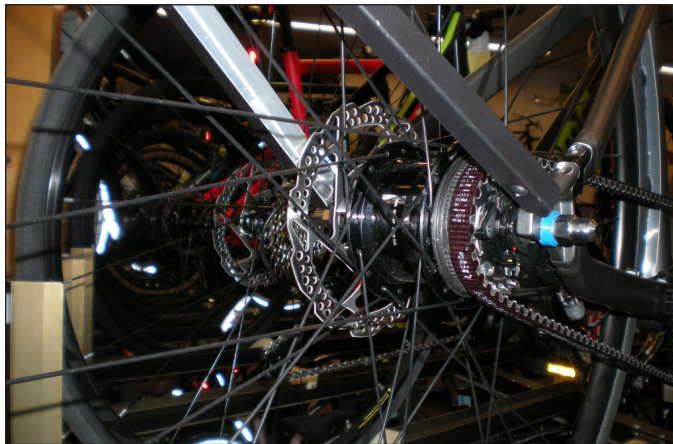
Sumner: It seems that more people should enjoy bicycling. What's wrong?

Peter: Personally I find that riding a bicycle is much more enjoyable when I am in shape. Some people spend hours on the internet participating in bicycle forums. I tell them if your screen time became riding time you will achieve super fitness in no time. Getting out the door can be the hardest part of your bike ride. Fifteen minutes into your ride, you will wonder why the hesitation!

The first ingredient for enjoying bicycling is getting into shape. The second is finding bicycle-friendly roads. Choose the right time of day. Avoid rush hours and get onto New England's unbeatable network of back roads. Avoid the roads with numbers. Enjoy roads with varying terrain



Carbon fiber frames



A high-end commuting bicycle with a belt instead of a chain, a rear hub with many gears inside, and disk brakes



A bicycle on a high-end trainer

and overhead trees. Pick riding buddies who are compatible.

Sumner: How can a person find group rides?

Peter: The Wheelworks website has a calendar of events and rides. It is important to pick a group ride that is suited to your speed and temperament. Cycling can be a very social event. Ride leaders need to enforce a group etiquette and not allow slower riders to disappear off the back.

Sumner: How can people learn to repair bicycles?

Peter: We have classes here. We offer six-hour classes that are popular. They are split into two three-hour sessions. They are taught by Ed Munafo, a former junior high school teacher. He is great. We also have other repair class formats. See the "Park Tool School" listing in the Repair section of our website.

Sumner: Did you learn bicycle mechanics by taking classes?

Peter: No. When we were young, basic mechanical training was taught at school. If you had a mechanical aptitude, you learned at home by taking things apart. That is still a great way to learn. Watch for a discarded bike on trash day and take it apart. I had a youngster and a distraught mother come in with what had been a new bicycle a short time ago, but now was in pieces. I had to explain to the kid that what he did shows commendable curiosity, but next time practice on something that didn't cost your mother so much money.

A lot of bicycles end up in the trash. To successfully revive a trashed bicycle requires that you know the difference between junk and a bicycle with potential. Restoring junk bikes can get expensive and can be dangerous if not done correctly.

Sumner: Show me some bikes in the showroom.

Peter: For most people, a hybrid bicycle is a good start. Hybrid bicycles have straight, upright, comfortable handlebars and wide-range gearing for hills. We have some with airless, no-flats tires, like LimeBikes.

Bikes best suited for commuting will usually have wider tires, carrier racks, fenders, and lights.

Disk brakes, internal gear rear hubs, and a "belt" drive (to replace the traditional chain) are all nice upgrades to a commuting bike.

Disk brakes are increasingly common on all types of bicycles. They require much less brake lever force and they do not wear away the sides of the wheel rims, increasing rim life.

Some high-end performance bicycles have electronically controlled derailleurs. These get software updates. Some bicycles have GPS navigational aid holders factory-installed. Personally, I still use paper maps.

We have single-speed bicycles, often called fixies. Fixies are popular as urban commuting bikes. Their simplicity makes maintenance easy. Fixies differ from single-speed freewheel bikes as a "fixed" wheel will not allow you to coast or "freewheel." You are always pedaling, uphill and downhill.

Sumner: If you are young and strong, you can get up hills without changing gears.

Peter: Electric-assisted bicycles are a growing part of our business. These are not motorcycles. They have no throttle. The electric motor assists you. The harder you pedal, the more assist you get. Set the system for less assist, and your battery lasts longer before recharging. The electric bicycles we now have are solid and serviceable.



Peter Mooney with an electric-assist cargo bike at Wheelworks

Here is a cargo bicycle with electric assist. Jeff Roth (chairman of the first Belmont Community Path Committee) and his family have an e-assisted cargo bike. They can put their kids on the back with a load of groceries and get up the hill to home.

Fat bicycles have large cross-section tires that are inflated to low pressure. They can ride over things offroad. They can do well on snow and sand. They are used for mountain biking as an alternative to full suspensions frames to absorb the bumps of rough terrain.

Cyclocross is something to consider if you want to race while avoiding roads and traffic. It is cross country racing on closed courses that usually have some sections where riders pick up their bicycles and run. Cyclocross bicycles are basically road bikes with higher cranks for more ground clearance.

For keen athletes who need to keep in shape during the winter in New England, there are smart trainers. You put your bike on a trainer inside and pedal. The best modern trainers completely replace the back wheel and are calibrated and connected online so users all over the world can simultaneously race against each other. We also have simpler options for regular folks who want to get some indoor bicycle exercise.

Sumner: I see carbon fiber frames, steel frames, aluminum frames, and titanium. I have always been happy with steel. Am I missing something?

Peter: All of those materials can make excellent bicycle frames. Currently the industry darling is carbon fiber. Look at these. You can spot the carbon fiber bicycles easily because they have appealing, aerodynamic design that's sculpted for visual attraction. Carbon fiber is the frame choice for high-end road bicycles. Mountain bicycles are also made from carbon fiber. Metal frames are not sculpted in that way. Steel was the dominant material 30-plus years ago. Back

then the tubes of the frame were joined by lugs and brazing. Now most steel frames are welded without lugs. Steel is out of fashion. Aluminum is the favored metal for high volume production now. Titanium has the advantage that it does not rust. It can be left bare and has a natural sheen that is attractive and lasts.

Sumner: How are bike paths going to affect bicycling?

Peter: Bike paths are wonderful. Some people will ride only on a bike path. They load their bike on a car and drive to a path. As bike paths get built and as they become increasingly interconnected, more people will be able to get somewhere on paths, so they will be useful for transportation. The paths that follow the Central Massachusetts Railroad route will pass three houses away from where I live and come to Waverley Square here. That will be great for me. I hope to live long enough to get to use it.

Sumner: I think of bike paths as training wheels for adults. New riders will gain confidence in their bicycle skills on a path so they will dare to bicycle

on roads for transportation. Will that work?

Peter: Bikes, like pianos, need practice. The more you use one, the more comfortable and confident you become. As a new bike rider, any riding experience that creates confidence is huge.

If you want advice about what bike to buy, tell Wheelworks about yourself. They will make suggestions. The least expensive new bike is a bit over \$400. The most expensive bikes are over \$10,000. The tuition for a six-hour maintenance class is \$100. Being healthy and in shape is priceless.

Sumner Brown is a director of the Belmont Citizens Forum.



A Peter Mooney steel frame bicycle

Thank you for your continued support.

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Letter to The Editor

We are always glad to hear readers' opinions and grateful for corrections or clarifications on any topics we cover. Thanks to one astute reader for this letter regarding the January/February 2019 article, "Frozen Water in Belmont: Stories of Imagination and Unexpected Consequences" by Anne-Marie Lambert.

To the Editor,

Concerning the box on the bottom of page 17 on the molecular structure of water:

The statement, "The coldest and densest water in a pond is still at the bottom, but then floats to the surface as the hexagon ice crystals form" is incorrect.

Water has its maximum density at 4°C (just under 40°F). That is what the temperature at the bottom of the pond with ice on it will be. Going back to the above statement:

1. Yes, the densest water in a pond is at the bottom.
2. No, the coldest water is not at the bottom, but at the surface.
3. Ice does not form at the bottom and float up, but forms at the surface.

Howard Herzog
MIT Energy Initiative

CORRECTION

In the January/February 2019 issue of the *BCF Newsletter*, the map on pages 18–19 indicating Jacob Hittinger's wharves was incorrectly dated to 1835. The correct date is 1848.

Lone Tree Hill Volunteer Day—April 27

Join us in stewarding Lone Tree Hill! The Belmont Citizens Forum, in conjunction with the Judy Record Conservation Fund, is holding its seventh annual cleanup and trail maintenance day on **April 27, from 9 AM until noon**. Help complete the planting of trees along the Pine Allee, as well as cleaning up and removing invasive species at the Coal Road area. Students can earn community service credits.

Bounded by Concord Avenue, Pleasant Street, and Mill Street, Lone Tree Hill spans 119 acres of permanently protected conservation land and is available to everyone. It is stewarded through a public/private partnership by the town and McLean Hospital, and is managed by the Land Management Committee.

For more information, go to belmontcitizensforum.org or email bcfprogramdirector@gmail.com.



SARA MCCABE

Saiganesh Chintala was one of more than 50 volunteers who planted trees and removed trash at last year's Lone Tree Hill Volunteer Day.

Belmont Roots

Environmental News, Notes, and Events

By Meg Muckenhoupt



In the winter, the outside world fades to an annoyance if you're lucky enough to have a warm house and an indoor job. Going from home to car to work to gym to groceries to home

only involves the briefest intervals of exposure to the frigid air, the weak, thin light, the silent woods, the frozen ground . . . or so you think.

That frigid air is actually trying to get into your house, and it often succeeds. Now is the time to check for air leaks, before the weather warms. You may have noticed a draft at your windows or door, but cold air can also penetrate via electrical boxes, fireplace dampers, and cable and phone lines. See a complete list of suspect areas and instructions for an easy pressure test to detect leaks at energy.gov/energysaver/weatherize/air-sealing-your-home/detecting-air-leaks.

By the beginning of March, the world beyond your house has interests besides invading your home. Woodcocks, the carefully camouflaged little ground birds that look like bundles of dry leaves, begin their absurd twilight courting flights, making noises like overtaxed microwave alarms before they shoot 50 feet up into the air—only to flutter back down again to the exact same place.

Woodcock Walk

Sunday, March 10, 5:30–6:45 PM

Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary, 10 Juniper Road, Belmont

Hike into the meadow to view the courtship ritual of the American Woodcock. Just after sunset, the males will start a series of calls which sound like a raspy “peent” before spiraling up into the sky, twittering

until they return to the same spot on the ground. Members \$12, nonmembers \$15. Register at massaudubon.org or call 617-489-5050.

On March 20, the spring equinox arrives—the first day of the year when the plane of Earth’s equator passes through the center of the sun. March is a fine time to contemplate how to use the sun’s energy more efficiently to power our earthly lives.

Google’s Project Sunroof uses Google Maps images to predict how much sun your roof will get each year and how much money you would save each year by installing solar panels. Take a look at your solar scores at google.com/get/sunroof.

Sustainable Belmont Meeting

Wednesday, March 6, 7–9 PM

Check website for location.

Get updates on solar energy in Belmont and a peek into the solar future including battery storage. sustainablebelmont.net

As spring arrives, the world outside becomes more appealing than the winter-worn indoors. Take some time to go outside and look—really look—at the life emerging around you. Belmont has been settled for more than 300 years, but an astonishing variety of birds, insects, plants, and water creatures persist in backyards and in refuges like Habitat and Fresh Pond. There are many curious and surprising organisms nearby.

By observing the behavior of plants and animals, and recording your observations, you can help local and nationwide groups track climate change. Earthwise Aware and Habitat both offer classes in how to make and share useful observations, and Mount Auburn Cemetery has ongoing citizen science trainings as well: see mountauburn.org/attention-citizen-scientists/.

How You Can Help Climate & Wildlife Scientists

Monday, March 11 or Monday, March 25, 6–7:30 PM

250 Fresh Pond Parkway, Cambridge

This is a crash course about participative science, aka citizen science, or active public involvement in scientific research. This class explores what citizen science is, why it is needed, where it is needed, how you can help individually or by joining local projects at the Fresh Pond Reservoir, and some of the tools to help. Donation requested. For more information, see earthwiseaware.org or write to claire.oneill@earthwiseaware.org. (Similar class offered at Habitat on Tuesday, March 26—see details on page 18.)

Climate Science and Policy: A Call to Action

Sunday, March 24, 12:30–2 PM

First Church in Belmont, 404 Concord Ave, Belmont
Learn about the latest climate science and current policy options for dealing with our changing climate from Peter Frumhoff, Chief Climate Scientist of the Union of Concerned Scientists, and Representative Will Brownsberger. A presentation about local issues and a discussion will follow the talk. For more information, write to climate@betheltemplecenter.org.

iNaturalist Field Training at Fresh Pond

Saturday, April 13, 10–11:30 AM

Ranger Station, Fresh Pond Reservation, 250 Fresh Pond Parkway, Cambridge

One of the world’s most popular nature apps, iNaturalist helps you identify the plants and animals around you. By recording and sharing your observations, you’ll create research-quality data for scien-

tists working to better understand and protect nature. Upload the iNaturalist app (app store/google play), and find out how to take great pictures and record great observations! Free, for adults ages 14 and up. Registration is required. For more information, see earthwiseaware.org or write to claire.oneill@earthwiseaware.org.

2019 City Nature Challenge at Fresh Pond

Saturday, April 27, 1–3 PM

Fresh Pond Reservation, 250 Fresh Pond Parkway, Cambridge

This weekend, cities across the world will be competing to see who can make the most observations of nature, find the most species, and engage the most people. Earthwise Aware (EWA) is participating in this year’s challenge at the Fresh Pond Reservoir! Join us and observe and record what you see. Registration required. For more information, see earthwiseaware.org/2019-city-nature-challenge or write to claire.oneill@earthwiseaware.org.

Phenology Citizen Science Project

Wednesday May 15, 8–9:15 AM

Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary, 10 Juniper Road, Belmont

Phenology is the study of timing in nature. Join Wayne Daly for a walk to observe trees and other species that are emerging and blooming. Record measurements to compare with past and future years. Register at massaudubon.org or call 617-489-5050.

Switch to digital delivery

Consider receiving the *Belmont Citizens Forum Newsletter* via email. You’ll be able to read the newsletter in full color, help us reduce our printing and mailing costs (among our biggest expenses), and also help save a few more trees.

Remember, you can always find printed copies at the Belmont Public Library and at the Beech Street Center. And if you are looking for previously published issues, you’ll find them on our website, going back to 2000, at belmontcitizensforum.org.

To request electronic delivery only, email us at bcfprogramdirector@gmail.com. Please use “Electronic” in the subject line. And thanks to everyone who has gone digital so far!

Just as your own home may be looking a little dusty around the edges, the landscapes that we humans have been inhabiting often need care at the end of a long winter. This is the time to get a soil test, to see what nutrients your landscape and lawn may be lacking, and what they don't need at all. Excess fertilizer on lawns washes off in the rain, running off and polluting our local waterways like Clay Pit Pond, Little Pond, and Beaver Brook. With a \$20 soil test, you can save money on wasted fertilizer, and save our waterways from foul algae overgrowth. Go to ag.umass.edu/services/soil-plant-nutrient-testing-laboratory/ordering-information-forms.

There are plenty of opportunities to make our community healthier and happier. Belmont's Habitat Audubon Sanctuary harbors invasive species that will greedily gobble up more territory until they are removed. The Charles River needs people to pick up all the cans and plastic bits and bobs that have built up over the year. Even our community could use a little attention, and Belmont will be hosting a "Working Better Together" session. Invite your neighbor who went to the pollinator talk to come with you.

One piece of spring upkeep you may never have to bother with again: spraying your trees for winter moths. Professor Joseph Elkinton and his laboratory staff at the University of Massachusetts have been releasing parasitic flies that prey on winter moth caterpillars. As of 2018, they have released the flies at 44 sites, including several in Greater Boston, and winter moth populations have been reduced by more than 90 percent at these sites. Read all about it at elkinton-lab.wordpress.com/current-research-projects/.

Land Stewardship Sunday, March 17, 1–3 PM

Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary,
10 Juniper Road, Belmont
Cut and pull unwanted plants, pile brush, plant native



Jack the goat with volunteer caretaker Janine Hart-Hueber at Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary

shrubs, and care for the land and its inhabitants. Free, but registration is required. Register at massaudubon.org or call 617-489-5050,

29th Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference: Enhancing Community through the Land Saturday, March 23, 8 AM–4 PM

Worcester Technical High School, One Skyline Drive, Worcester
The Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition coordinates this land conservation conference with workshops on topics ranging from conservation techniques to communications to fundraising. The keynote speaker will be Gina McCarthy, former Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. For more information, visit massland.org.

No PhD Needed: Saving the Planet with Citizen Science Tuesday, March 26, 7:30–8 PM

Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary,
10 Juniper Road, Belmont
Climate and biodiversity science need you—and your data collections skills! We'll discuss participative science (aka citizen science), which is public involvement in scientific research. Free, but registration is required. Register at massaudubon.org or call 617-489-5050. (Similar class offered at Fresh Pond on Monday, March 11 or March 25—see details on page 16.)

Reducing Harmful Chemicals in the Home and Garden

Wednesday, April 3, 7–9 PM

Check website for location.

This panel discussion will focus on how to have a healthy, manageable home and garden while reducing use of toxic substances. For more information, see sustainablebelmont.net or write to sustainablebelmont@gmail.com.

More than Just the Buzz: Finding Real Solutions to Native Pollinator Decline

Wednesday, April 3, 7–8:30 PM

Cambridge Public Library, Main Library Lecture Hall,
449 Broadway, Cambridge

Robert Gegear from Worcester Polytechnic Institute will discuss why pollinators have been declining and explain the beautifully complex interactions between plant species and the insects that pollinate them. For more information see grownativemass.org or call 781-790-8921.

Preparing for the Goats Saturday, April 13, 1–3 PM

Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary, 10 Juniper Road, Belmont
Set up our goat browsing areas by resetting fences, cutting paths, expanding huts, and hauling supplies. Children under 9th grade must be accompanied by an adult. Tools and gloves provided. Free, but registration is required. Register at massaudubon.org or call 617-489-5050.

20th Annual Earth Day Charles River Cleanup

Saturday, April 27, 9 AM–noon

Various locations along the river
The Annual Earth Day Charles River Cleanup brings together over 3,000 volunteers each year to pick up litter, remove invasive species, and assist with park maintenance. For more information see crwa.org/charles-river-cleanup, call 781-788-0007, or write to charles@crwa.org

Working Better Together Sunday, April 28, 3–5 PM

Beech Street Center, 266 Beech Street, Belmont
Where is Belmont going as a community? In this time of change, how can we all—individuals, town government, businesses, social and religious organizations—work better together? Participate in a workshop with town leaders, your neighbors and Dr. Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone* and *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*. Space is limited. Preregister at eventbrite.com.

7th Annual Goat Gala Saturday, May 4, 1–3 PM

Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary, 10 Juniper Road, Belmont
Meet Habitat's friendly herd of Nigerian Dwarf goats. Bring your kids to meet the kids, does, and wethers. Join in games, entertainment, and raffles, and sample goat-related products, and take all the goat selfies you like.

Thank You to Our Contributors

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