



Belmont Citizens Forum

Community Path Began Decades Ago

By Vincent Stanton, Jr.

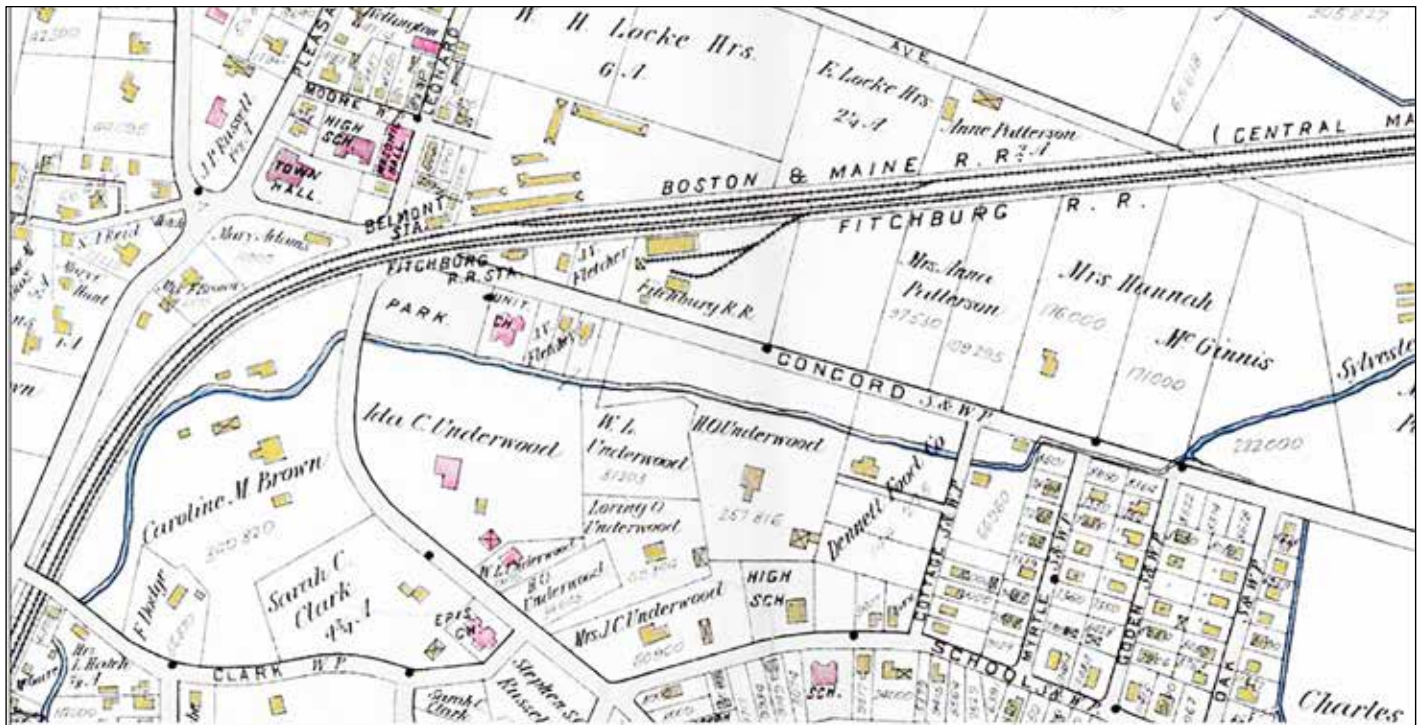
It has taken over two decades of stop-and-start development to bring the Belmont Community Path to its current state of planning and formal design, but a timeline for construction of the path is finally in sight. The design and engineering of Phase I of the Belmont Community Path, from Brighton Street to the Clark Street Bridge, started last fall and should take about two years to complete.

In the next two years, path plans will progress through three major milestones: 25, 75, and 100 percent design, as part of a Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) guided process. At each state of completion plans will be reviewed by MassDOT, the MBTA and the Town of Belmont. Following the 100% design

review, final plans, specifications, and estimates (PS&E) will be completed in the spring of 2022.

Once the PS&E documents are complete the project can go out to bid. While the design proceeds, Belmont will also be pursuing construction funding through the federally funded Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), administered by the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Construction will only start once TIP funding is in place, and will take at least another year. At some point, probably well before Phase 1 construction begins, planning will start for Phase 2, which runs from the Clark Street Bridge to the Belmont/Waltham line, and the entire cycle will repeat.



Map of the Fitchburg and Massachusetts Central Railroad lines crossing Belmont from the 1900 *Atlas of Middlesex County*. The Belmont Center Railroad bridge on Leonard Street was built in 1907.

VINCENT STANTON, JR.

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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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Letters to the editor may be sent to
P. O. Box 609, Belmont MA 02478 or to
bcfprogramdirector@gmail.com

belmontcitizensforum.org

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That may seem like a very long wait, but viewed in historical context we are much closer to the end than the beginning. Here is a chronology of the events that shaped current plans for the Belmont Community Path.

1843: Railroads Come to Belmont

The Fitchburg Railroad opens with service from North Station, Boston, to Waltham via Belmont on the flattest available route, north of Cushing Corner, south of Belmont Hill. The railroad is extended from Belmont to Fitchburg the next year.

1881: Trains Run on Future Community Path Route

The Massachusetts Central Railroad (MCRR) opens with service from Cambridge to Hudson via Belmont. In Belmont, the MCRR tracks run parallel to the Fitchburg Railroad tracks, on the north side.

Over the next six years, the MCRR extends its tracks all the way to Northampton, MA, 104 miles from Boston. In 1887 the Boston and Maine Railroad acquires the MCRR.

A significant part of the former MCRR right of way will be used for Belmont's community path. West of Beaver Street in Waltham, the MCRR splits from the Fitchburg Line, and from that point west it is an abandoned right of way owned by the MBTA. In 2010 the MBTA leases the former MCRR right of way (from Waltham to Berlin, MA) to the Division of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) for recreational use for a term of 99 years.

1970: MBTA Buys Bankrupt Railroads

The Boston and Maine Railroad files for bankruptcy. In 1976, the Massachusetts Department of Public Works acquires the Boston and Maine Railroad property (trackage and equipment) for the present commuter rail system, including the abandoned MCRR and Fitchburg Lines. The commuter rail system later becomes part of the MBTA.

1982: A Tragic Death on the Tracks

On December 6, a Belmont High School student dies in a train collision on the tracks near the high school.

1983: Town Pledges to Make Path Safer

Following the student death, “concern was expressed for the safety of the many High School students who cross the railroad embankment daily on their way to and from school,” according to a report by the Underpass Study Committee. On April 25, Belmont Town Meeting adopts Article 49, which calls for “. . . the question of providing a pedestrian link between Alexander Avenue Extension and the high school playing field be referred to a committee to be appointed by the Board of Selectmen to study and report to the next Annual Town Meeting.”

The committee determines that an underpass is too expensive (estimated cost: up to \$500,000). Instead, they recommend a surface pedestrian and bicycle crossing with gates with an estimated cost of less than \$30,000. The committee speculates that the state might pay for 75% of a combined pedestrian/bicycle path.

1994: River Path Piques Public Interest

The Board of Selectmen forms the Bikeway Planning Committee in response to interest in a new path linking the Paul Dudley White Bike Path, which runs along the Charles River, to Alewife Station and Belmont Center. The possibility that the new path could get federal funding is raised. A similar path from



Dr. Paul Dudley White (front) pedals with Chicago's Mayor Richard Daley at the 1956 opening of the Ogden Avenue bicycle path.

UIC

“Walk more, eat less, sleep more.”

Boston's famous bike path along the Charles River is named for a Belmont resident. In the 1950s, Belmont's Paul Dudley White becomes the most prominent national advocate for dedicated bicycle paths as part of his larger campaign to encourage Americans to exercise more.

Dr. White, who rose to public fame late in his career as President Dwight Eisenhower's cardiologist, was an advocate of exercise—walking and bicycling specifically—from the 1920s to his death in 1973. He successfully lobbied Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago to create a bicycle path; White and Daley are pedaling a two seater at the opening above.

White also cofounded and led the Committee for Safe Bicycling, which successfully advocated for the first state-sponsored bike path in Massachusetts, on Nantucket, built in 1958, and for the path around the Charles River Basin that was named for him in 1975.

Alewife to Belmont Center was first discussed in the late 1980s, when the Minuteman Bike path was being planned.

1995: Belmont Joins Rail Trail Study

The Belmont selectmen approve Belmont's participation in the Central Massachusetts Rail Trail Feasibility Study. The study is conducted by the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) of the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization, a regional planning organization serving 97 communities in eastern Massachusetts. Belmont is a critical link in the Massachusetts Central Rail Trail (MCRT) to be built along a part of the 104-mile Massachusetts Central Railroad right of way, between Alewife Station and Berlin, MA.

1997: Report Details Belmont's Rail Trail Challenges

CTPS releases the Central Massachusetts Rail Trail Feasibility Study. Three aspects of the study inform Belmont's subsequent work to develop a community path.

1. A path through Belmont was deemed feasible. The routes considered in later studies were all described first in this study.

2. Belmont has two challenges that the other five communities did not share: the path would run next to a live train line, as far as Beaver Street in Waltham; and large segments of the former Mass Central Railroad right of way in Belmont had been sold to private parties.

3. Many Channing Road residents expressed opposition to a path along the north side of the Fitchburg line on the former Mass Central Railroad right of way.

1997: Belmont Looks at Path Routes

The town commissions a more detailed study of possible routes: the Belmont Bikeway Preliminary Feasibility Analysis. The study introduces the idea of the bikeway as a community path connecting neighborhoods to public amenities such as the high school playing fields, the Underwood Pool, and the library. Possible routes on both the north and the south side of the Fitchburg Line were delineated.

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1998: Recession Pauses Path Progress

The selectmen vote to participate in the design process for the MCRT with the caveat that the town will back out if it is not satisfied with trail design in Belmont. Soon afterwards, the MCRT design process stalls when Weston reverses a 1997 vote of support and withdraws from the project. Progress is also impeded by reduced federal and state funding during the 2001 recession. Other communities continued to move forward on their own, and the DCR continued to advance



Illustration of the proposed "box-over" park for Waverley Square featuring a central lane for the bike path. This design was featured in the 2017 *Feasibility Study for the Belmont Community Path*.

permitting of the MCRT west of Belmont, albeit slowly.

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2008: BCF Buys Path Land

The Belmont Citizens Forum (BCF) purchases a long, thin strip of land parallel to and north of the Fitchburg Line along Channing Road. The parcel was part of the Massachusetts Central Railroad right of way, sold to a private citizen by the Boston and Maine Railroad as it was sliding into bankruptcy in 1971. The BCF publicly states its intent to donate the property to the town for use in a future community path.

2010: Brighton Path Building Begins

Construction begins on Belmont's first community path, the Fitchburg Cutoff Path from Brighton Street to Alewife Station, with Belmont's portion of the path amounting to 683 feet. Belmont state Representative Anne Paulson was instrumental in moving this project forward. MassDOT supervises the path's design and construction, which was funded with federal transportation dollars via the regionally administered Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

2010: DCR Leases Path Land From MBTA

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) signs a 99-year lease with the MBTA allowing development of a trail along the Mass Central Railroad corridor between Beaver Street in Waltham and Berlin, just west of route 495.

DCR leads environmental and historical permitting for the MCRT along the leased corridor and provides a generic design for a



JEFF ROTH

CPAC logo.

19-foot-wide corridor. Each town is responsible for conducting additional reviews and for detailed path design.

2011: MAPC Releases Belmont Study

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) releases a draft Belmont/Waltham Community Trail Alignment Study (the final version is issued in 2012) and presents its findings to the Belmont selectmen and the public. The study divides Belmont into five segments from the Waltham border to the Cambridge border. It also identifies at least two possible trail alignments in each segment and a preferred route for four segments. An Alexander Avenue underpass is strongly recommended, regardless of whether the path is located on the north or south side of the Fitchburg Line. The study also notes that some Channing Road residents continue to oppose the path.

2011-2012: DCR Gets Path Easement

Michael Mahoney, as a condition of obtaining a building permit for the French and Mahoney complex at 40-42 Brighton Street, grants DCR an easement across his property for a possible future community path.

2012-2014: Belmont Path Committee Appointed

The Belmont Board of Selectmen form the Community Path Advisory Committee (CPAC) to solicit community input about path features, to identify, study and rank potential routes, and to make recommendations about next steps. CPAC delivered its final report and recommendations to the selectmen in June 2014.

The top-ranked route runs along the north side of the tracks from the Waltham border to Waverley Station, shifting to the south side of the tracks from Waverley to Belmont Center Station, then back to the north side of the tracks to the Fitchburg Cutoff Path at Brighton Street. CPAC recommends a feasibility study to evaluate at least two route segments throughout Belmont, one north and one south of the Fitchburg Line.

2013: Belmont Path Gap Rated Region's #2 Priority

CTPS releases the Bicycle Network Evaluation study which ranks 232 gaps in the community path network inside Route 495. The gap between Waltham and Waverley Square, Belmont, is ranked the second-highest priority in the region, exceeded only by a segment of the Somerville Community Path which was subsequently built.

2014-2017: New Bike Path Committee, Feasibility Study

The Board of Selectmen forms the Community Path Implementation Advisory Committee (CPIAC) to oversee a feasibility study of path routes identified by CPAC and earlier studies.

In June 2015, Belmont Town Meeting votes to appropriate \$100,000 for a community path feasibility study. State Representative David Rogers and state Senator William Brownsberger secure another \$100,000 from the state transportation budget for the study.

CPIAC selects the Pare Corporation and K3 Landscape Architecture team to perform the study. The Pare/ K3 Landscape Architecture team holds 10 public meetings in 2016 and 2017, submitting their Feasibility Study for the Belmont Path to CPIAC and the Board of Selectmen in November 2017. The feasibility

Community Path Update

By Kate Bowen

Work continues with Nitsch Engineering and the Belmont Community Path Project Committee (CPPC) to bring the path to fruition. A public engagement meeting is anticipated in spring 2020. At that meeting, design solutions will be shared and discussed for Phase 1 of the two-phase project, including pinch points such as the former Belmont Municipal Light Department building. The Alexander underpass portion of the project (segment 1A), for which the town received a MasTrails Grant of \$150,000, will also be discussed at that meeting. Nitsch Engineering presented two technical options for installing the tunnel alongside the functioning rail system:

Jacking: a relatively slower process that pushes the tunnel pipe through the ground under the rail system without disrupting service.

Cut-and-cover: a relatively faster process which involves cutting the tracks while temporarily disrupting rail service, excavating the area, installing the tunnel's overhead support system, and replacing the tracks. Massachusetts Department of Transportation representative Michael Trapanier, Nitsch Engineering, and MBTA officials will be reviewing the related engineering solutions.

Call for logo designs

The CPPC is announcing a logo design contest for the community path project. All community members, especially students, are encouraged to participate. All entries will be acknowledged on the path project website. For more information, see <https://www.belmont-ma.gov/community-path-project-committee>, and the recently launched project website, <https://belmontcommunitypath.com/>.



ARTS ARLINGTON

Public art along the Minuteman Bikeway, Arlington, MA.

study makes several innovative recommendations including:

A route along the north side of the Fitchburg Line from the Waltham border to Waverley Station, where a new “box-over” design would cover the tracks. The small existing park at the station could be expanded over the entire train platform, with the community path traversing the park between Lexington Street and Trapelo Road.

A route along the south side of the Fitchburg Line from Waverley to the Belmont Housing Authority (BHA) parking lot, leading to a new pedestrian/bicycle bridge crossing from behind the BHA building at 59 Pearson Road to the north side of the Fitchburg Line just west of the Clark Street Bridge

A route along the north side of the Fitchburg Line through Belmont Center and along the tracks behind Channing Road until Alexander Avenue, then crossing under the tracks to the south side, and crossing back to the north at Brighton Street

2015-2017: Track Work Limits Belmont Path Options

The Fitchburg Line Improvement Project, a five-year, \$306-million-dollar, federally funded project to improve service along the entire 53 mile line, involved extensive construction in Belmont. New track was laid from Belmont

Center to Brighton Street, along with two new north-south track cross-overs, a new signaling system, three new signal houses on the south side of the tracks (abutting the high school property) and four new signal towers. The MBTA altered the location of one signal house to accommodate a possible future underpass at Alexander Avenue Extension based on input from the Belmont selectmen. The new signal houses limit the space for a path along the south side of the tracks.

2018-2019: Belmont Pursues Path Funding

In March 2018, Senator Brownsberger, working with the Board of Selectmen, the town administrator, and the CPIAC chair, determines that MassDOT is willing to accept the Belmont path as a TIP-funding eligible project in two intersecting parts:

- A north-south path from Channing Road to Concord Avenue via an underpass at Alexander Avenue (Phase 1A).
- An east-west path along the Fitchburg Line from Brighton Street to the Clark Street Bridge. The town can specify the final route for this segment later (north vs. south of the tracks) (Phase 1B)

This approach allows the town to move ahead with the Belmont Community Path while



The proposed route of the Massachusetts Central Railroad from 1871.

postponing a final decision on the route east of Alexander Avenue. Phase 2 of the community path, from the Clark Street Bridge to the Waltham border, will follow. In June, the town applies for TIP funding eligibility, and in July MassDOT accepts Belmont's application.

The Board of Selectmen, recognizing that the Pare study's top route recommendation involves traversing land owned by Purecoat North, asks if the property owner will grant an easement to Belmont and allow demolition of the north wall of the Crate Escape building to create space for the path. The answer is no, and in 2019 the selectmen vote to route the path along the north side of the Fitchburg Line from Alexander Avenue to Brighton Street. (The MBTA also expressed "dire concerns" about a path crossing the Fitchburg Line at Brighton Street in a November 2018 letter to the selectmen.)

In November 2018, Town Meeting appropriates \$400,000 of Community Preservation Act funds for design of the Phase 1A of the Belmont path in order to synchronize path design with the design of the new middle-high school. The selectmen appoint the Community Path Project Committee (CPPC) to hire a design and engineering team for the path and to help the town secure state and federal funding for construction.

2019: Design Work Begins

In April 2019, CPPC issues a request for proposals for phases 1A and 1B of path design.

They select the Nitsch Engineering team. Nitsch had designed the Fitchburg Cutoff Path and several other segments of the MCRT.

In May 2019, Town Meeting appropriates \$1,000,000 of Community Preservation Act funds for design of phase 1B of the Belmont path. In June 2019, the town learns that its application for a \$150,000 Mass Trails grant from DCR was successful, reducing the amount the town will have to spend on design.

At the design kickoff meeting in September, Nitsch outlines its approach and tentative schedule, from a public engagement walk along Channing Road in November 2019 to submitting final plans in April 2022.

2020: Location, Location, Location

CPPC meets with the Nitsch team in January to review progress. MassDOT project manager Michael Trepanier attends and promises to facilitate discussions with the MBTA, crucial for determining the exact location of the path vis a vis the tracks.

Vincent Stanton, Jr., is a director of the Belmont Citizens Forum and a member of the Belmont Community Path Project Committee. This summary represents his personal perspective on the history of efforts to build an off-road path in Belmont.

Select Board Candidate Answers BCF Questions

Each year, the Belmont Citizens Forum asks Select Board candidates questions about issues facing our town. This year, Adam Dash provided answers. He was limited to 1,200 words.

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

Finally, after decades of Belmont residents waiting, the community path is being brought to reality. Parts 1A (the Alexander Avenue tunnel under the railroad tracks) and 1B (from Brighton Street to the Clark Street Bridge) are currently being designed. We need to make sure that the construction of Parts 1A and 1B gets funded and completed, and that Part 2, from the Clark Street Bridge to Waltham, gets designed and built.

While the project is going well, we cannot be passive. I will continue to work with state and town bodies to make sure the project maintains momentum and is completed efficiently. We need the community path to encourage bicycle and pedestrian travel, reduce our traffic congestion, lower carbon emissions, and create a healthy new recreational opportunity.

What steps should the town take to coordinate with surrounding municipalities to become more resilient to the effects of global warming?

Belmont is studying climate change as a regional matter, recognizing that our town cannot address this issue alone. I have attended forums at the State House and with Representative Katherine Clark to discuss climate change impacts, such as rising water levels and increased storm frequency, and I recently participated in Belmont's own Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program. I voted to support work on the Mystic River dam to make it more resilient to storm surges, and I supported Belmont's efforts to eliminate illegal stormwater discharges. We will continue working with our neighbors to stay vigilant in this regard, as well as instituting our own measures, such as ensuring that we have redundancies in place.



ADAM DASH

Adam Dash

What changes should the town adopt to use less energy?

The town is working to reduce energy use now through its program to replace all streetlights with LED lighting, by taking energy conservation into account in new building projects, by designing the community path to provide a car-free way to travel, and by numerous other initiatives. We also voted to use the old incinerator site for solar purposes and for energy battery storage.

It is important that the energy we use be renewable. In the last three years, Belmont Light has become a recognized state leader in purchasing clean energy, and it is aiming to make even more progress in this regard.

What do you think are a reasonable goal and timetable for reducing pollution in Belmont's streams and ponds so they can support recreation like boating, swimming, and fishing?

Belmont has been working on this issue through its program of locating and eliminating illegal stormwater connections in its system and enforcing the stormwater bylaw regarding new construction, which Town Meeting passed a number of years ago. Capping the old incinerator site on Concord Avenue and using it for solar and battery storage purposes will also eliminate contaminated runoff from that location. While the Charles River is much cleaner than in the past, some waterways may be too contaminated for active recreational use after many years of abuse. That said, we will keep working to improve them.

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

McLean is back with a proposal to redevelop the part of its site that was rezoned for development two decades ago, but was never built on. The initial proposal was rightly rejected by our Planning Board for not having enough affordable housing and for not having the right amount of units overall, but the developers have returned with a new project that meets more of Belmont’s requests.

I support the goal of providing affordable units in Belmont, as well as senior housing, and bringing some of the McLean property onto our tax rolls. The Planning Board is holding meetings on the application, and Town Meeting will have to approve the proposed changes. I look forward to a robust public discussion about it.

Our state representatives are contemplating approaches like statewide zoning bills to cope with Boston-area housing shortage. What is a Belmont solution to housing?

I advocated and voted for the Housing Production Plan, which is Belmont’s roadmap toward providing more housing for all, whether for low-income residents, seniors, or veterans. As I noted before, the McLean project should be a big part of that. While we can do more, we also have to make sure that we do not overburden our school system or change the character of our town. Building affordable housing and senior

housing is important, and we will continue working to provide more of both.

Our Transportation Advisory Committee wants to make Belmont traffic better for people who are not in cars by making Belmont less convenient for drivers. Do you support this?

I advocated for, and voted to create, the new Transportation Advisory Committee, which examines pedestrian and bicycle matters and not just automobiles. I have supported adopting our new Traffic Calming Policy, extending our Safe Routes to School efforts, obtaining Complete Streets funding from the state, improving our sidewalk policy, and adding a traffic signal at the intersection of Lexington and Sycamore.

There is no one magic solution to address Belmont’s traffic problems, but by building the community path, providing safe pedestrian and bicycle routes, and making changes to force cut-through traffic to slow down, we can improve the situation, which is a regional problem.

What effect will the new high school have on transportation and traffic, and how should Belmont cope with those changes?

The High School Traffic Working Group is studying this issue and finding ways to address it with the help of a consultant. We also had a town-wide traffic study conducted to identify and quantify the traffic patterns we face, as the high school is only part of a much larger, regionally driven issue. We need a multipronged solution to give people easier, safer ways to get around Belmont without a car.

What kind of Planning Board should Belmont have?

Belmont needs a hard-working, diverse Planning Board made up of people with professional expertise. I have made sure to appoint candidates like that, and the Planning Board is currently a good one. I was proud to see them reject the initial McLean proposal on the grounds that it did not have the right mix of unit sizes and lacked enough affordable housing.

It's been 10 years since Belmont put together the 2010 Belmont Comprehensive Plan. Do we need another plan?

Funny you should ask this question because, yes, it is time for a new 10-year strategic plan, and Belmont is currently working to complete one by the end of 2020. The process is underway with input from multiple town committees and boards. I look forward to seeing the recommen-



KENNETH STAMPPER

Meet the neighbors: this specimen is one of several great blue herons that have been overwintering at Jerry's Pond, Cambridge, alongside Alewife Station.

dations that emerge from it. Belmont Light is also undertaking a strategic plan.

Describe your vision for Belmont 20 years from now.

My goal is to avoid struggling along from override to override by addressing Belmont's structural financial issues. That process is currently underway, led by the Financial Task Force II, which had help from a state grant that allowed us to bring in the Collins Center from UMass Boston and have them build a financial model for us. I also see a new library and skating rink to accompany the new high school and middle school, which serve as community centers for the town. We should also find a productive, vibrant use for the old Municipal Light Building site in Belmont Center once it is decommissioned.

Going beyond that, we need plans for our infrastructure, some of which may be fine now, but will require work in 20 years. By creating the new Long-Term Capital Planning Committee, we are getting started on that task now. I see a diverse and harmonious population dedicated to education, the environment, and each other, all living in housing that is within reach.

Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

I would like to note that on page 10 (Belmont Citizens Forum *Newsletter* January/February 2020), you state that architect Rachel Raymond built the earliest modern house in New England in Belmont. The house belonged to Rachel Raymond but the architect was Eleanor Raymond, her sister.

I only note this because Eleanor, being a woman architect, had a limited career. She deserves all the credit that she can get. It's sad that the house was quickly demolished soon after leaving private hands.

Laura Simmons

Laura - You are completely correct! I apologize for the error.

-Editor

Arlington Group Opposes Mugar Site Plans

By Meg Muckenhoupt

The Mugar wetlands are 17.7 acres of open land in East Arlington. Oaktree Development has proposed constructing a 207-unit apartment complex and six duplex townhouses on this site, to be renamed Thorndike Place. The Coalition to Save the Mugar Wetlands opposes building on the site, which is bordered by Route 2, Thorndike Field, and Dorothy, Edith, and Burch Streets.

The following interview with Clarissa Rowe, one of the founders of the Coalition to Save the Mugar Wetlands, was edited for length and clarity.

Why is the Mugar site important?

I think the reason Arlington and Belmont residents should care about this property is because it's one of the last undeveloped sites in the area, and it serves as a buffer or sponge for all the water in our low-lying communities. We're blessed to have wonderful water bodies in both towns, but also very high water tables, and when we get 100-year storms, which now happen more often than once every 100 years, we need somewhere to put that water.

Thanks to the overdevelopment of Cambridge up to both towns' line, there's no place for excess water to go. Because of new development

in Belmont as well, East Arlington neighborhoods get flooded a lot more than they used to be. We need the Mugar site as a neighborhood sponge, and to use the land for education. We [the Coalition to Save the Mugar Wetlands] would like to develop the site as a place where school children can learn about how wetlands are important to the overall environment and are even more important in urban environments. We could show children what exactly is happening, and the benefits of an open space which collects stormwater and storm drainage from other sites, and make it a teaching opportunity.

What's the current status of the Mugar site?

It's an undeveloped site with some urban fill, probably from construction of the Red Line. There's a lot of trash on it, and lots and lots of invasive vegetation like Phragmites reeds. There are also some wonderful old trees. We know these are wetlands because we see water on the site year-round. Water is especially prevalent in the springtime.

The Mugar land is next to one of Arlington's most important sports complexes. It's interesting to developers because the location is only a short walk to Alewife, the bike path, and the thickly developed East Arlington neighborhoods, consisting mostly of small two- to three-unit multifamily housing.

To developers, it's an excellent place to get on and off Route 2 to enter Arlington, Belmont, or Cambridge. The problem is that those side roadways are packed. I live right off Lake Street in Arlington. During rush hour, going a quarter of a mile can take a half hour. The last time Oaktree Development presented to us, they said [Thorndike Place] wouldn't do any harm to the traffic system. But that's only because traffic is already rated an F there, at the Lake Street and Massachusetts Avenue intersection.

What has the developer proposed?

The complex will have more than 200 housing units, and they were vague about the number of parking spaces. The last number



CLARISSA ROWE

Arlington's Magnolia Street Playground, 2010.



Side Elevations for Thorndike Place.

I saw was 300. That would be a nightmare for the neighborhood. They're thinking of building surface and "ground-level" parking under the building, like the developer did at the Faces site [now the Vox on 2 complex] across the way [Route 2].

It's a 40R development, which means that it follows state rules for building affordable housing near mass transit. They're saying it's adjacent to the bike path and the T, and it's positive because they'll be including 55 affordable units. They said, "We don't get many children coming to our apartments," even though they know that the Arlington elementary schools are overcrowded. We've had to build four to five new classrooms for the Hardy School, and the Thompson School had to be expanded just a couple of years after it was rebuilt. The town can't talk about the pressure of the schools as part of the 40B process—it's off the table—but it's a real issue for my town because East Arlington is a very desirable place to live, and we have overcrowding in the elementary schools.

Why is the coalition opposed to the development?

Flooding. Affordable housing is really important to us. Everywhere we can build affordable housing, we are, but we don't believe that people in affordable housing should be living in a swamp. Traffic is obviously an important issue too.

We have a lot of affordable units coming online. We have two new developments in Arlington Heights, one in East Arlington about to be constructed. We're building a lot of affordable housing. Arlington has little land, we just have a lot of water. We just don't have any land to build on.

How is the developer dealing with wetlands on the Mugar site?

When the Mugar family came to Arlington's Select Board in the 1990s, it was before FEMA redrew the boundaries of the floodplain in the mid-2000s. As of their last presentation, the developers failed to use updated FEMA maps in their work, and they obviously will have to. When I sat with them a few months ago, I said, "See this line? This is what you have to worry about." I don't know what agreement exists between the Mugar family and Oaktree Development – I think they have a lot of updating to do.

I'm very confident Arlington's Zoning Board of Appeals and Conservation Commission will look carefully at what they're presenting. A 40B developer has to provide \$10K to the town to review its work, and the Arlington Land Trust has also offered to help raise additional funds if the town needs more money for expert reviews.

Arlington has had three overwhelming town meeting votes to deny developments on this site and other wetlands sites. It's not just an East Arlington issue, it's a townwide issue.

More Mugar Information

Oaktree Development has a page about the proposed Thorndike Place development on coUrbanize.com, which bills itself a “community engagement solution purpose-built for real estate developers and planners to connect with neighbors.”

The [coUrbanize](http://coUrbanize.com) site states: “Thorndike Place proposes to construct a new 207-unit apartment building and 12 townhouse units, together with a preservation of approximately 11 acres of conserved land. The new development will provide excellent access to public transportation and employment opportunities in Arlington and beyond.”

To read more, see coUrbanize.com/projects/thorndike-place/information

For more information about the Coalition to Save the Mugar Wetlands, visit saveourwetlands.wordpress.com/

Oaktree Development’s plans for Thorndike Place are available at greenstaxx.com/portfolio/arlington/

People here get climate change, and how climate change is affecting our town.

I’ve worked with the developers on and off, as a Select Board member and as an Arlington Land Trust member. Their recent idea was to give the wetlands to the town for open space. It seems to me that they are handing the town the wetlands to manage. I asked, “Would an endowment come with that?” No, they just wanted a path to the T.

What is the current status of the development?

In the last go-round, the developers were using some survey and wetland delineation measurements from the 1990s. We [the Coalition] have suggested that information needs to be updated—both the survey and the wetland delineation—because of all the more recent construction nearby. They are going ahead with those surveys, and have asked the Zoning Board of Appeals for

an extension until April to do the work. They are confident they can build, so they are updating the information.

What are the next steps for the developers?

The developers will be following the Chapter 40B process—going before the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Conservation Commission. We have to abide by the Commonwealth’s wetland regulations—the 40B process doesn’t allow local wetlands bylaws to be used. It’s supposed to create affordable housing, but what it doesn’t allow is local control. There are a lot of communities in Massachusetts that don’t want affordable housing, but that’s not true of Arlington. We do want affordable housing.

The Zoning Board of Appeals has to rule within 180 days, so we’re looking at a six-month process after submission. The Select Board is looking at different ways of dealing with the land.

What can Belmont learn from the Mugar site?

I think what makes Arlington and Belmont’s experiences different is that with the Belmont Uplands development, the town leaders were all in favor of it. In Arlington, our town officials and Town Meeting are completely agreed on not building on that site. It’s a very different political landscape. Belmont has a lot of undeveloped land, so leaders and residents can see this fight and learn from it. People worked really hard to modify the Uplands development, without success. We don’t know that we’re going to be any more successful, but we’re going to try.

If you live in an urban area, every piece of unbuilt land is important. The Uplands site came up for consideration before climate change was so much on people’s minds. We’re hoping that the growing awareness of climate change makes the difference.

Editor’s note: Though Belmont officials did favor development of a research and development complex on the Uplands site, they generally opposed housing and particularly the 40B Royal Belmont that was eventually constructed.

Meg Muckenhoupt is editor of the Belmont Citizens Forum Newsletter.

Paper Bag Fee Would Reduce Emissions

By *Rahul Ramakrishnan*

As a lifelong Belmont resident and Belmont High School alum, I take pride in Belmont's forward-thinking mind-set and commitment to the environment. As a senior at MIT studying materials science, I have had the opportunity to learn about the diversity in production and policy surrounding the materials that make up our world. Recently, I thought about how I could use what I have learned to keep Belmont on an environmentally conscious trajectory, and an idea popped up.

Problems with Plastic—and Paper

For the last many years, we have repeatedly been told that paper bags are better for the environment than single-use plastic bags. Plastic bags are indeed the most visible form of plastic waste, and a quick Google search will reveal hundreds of photos and stories of plastic bags clogging up the environment and harming wildlife. Like many other towns and cities across the country, Belmont recently banned these plastic bags with the intent “to promote the use of reusable bags.”



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Paper bags have now replaced plastic ones in Belmont, and they are indeed far better than plastic from the perspective of recyclability and solid-waste generation. But paper is far worse than plastic in one important aspect: carbon emissions.

Producing one paper bag emits three to four times as much carbon compared to producing one polyethylene plastic bag.

Producing one paper bag emits three to four times as much carbon compared to producing one polyethylene plastic bag. Let that sink in: by switching bags from plastic to paper, Belmont may have tripled its carbon footprint with respect to bag production. Once you couple production emissions with the fact that paper production consumes carbon-capturing trees, the emissions results are even worse.

The extra carbon emissions in paper bag production largely come from the energy needed for raw materials extraction, and for transportation of the bags. The paper in paper bags is made of cellulose from trees; extracting and then pressing the cellulose pulp requires more energy than creating lightweight single-use plastic bags from oil. Paper bags also cost more to transport, because they weigh more per unit than plastic bags.

I want to be clear: we should not bring plastic back as a response to this. Plastic is still far worse than paper in post-consumer terms of waste generation, drainage system clogging, and a general lack of recyclability.

Paper bags, however, still have a larger carbon footprint compared to plastic bags. So how can we address emissions?

The answer lies in promoting reuse. The problem with paper bags is not that they are made of paper. It's that they keep getting produced, used, and thrown out in a short timeframe. The key is to reuse one's bags as much as possible, which has led many cities and states across the country to do what I'm proposing we do in Belmont: implement a town-wide 10-cent fee on paper bags.

This idea is neither unprecedented nor revolutionary. Our next-door neighbor, Cambridge, successfully implemented this policy in 2014. The fee goes back to the store where the bag was sold. It is not a tax. This is a tried-and-tested method for reducing paper-bag consumption. Since implementation, Cambridge's paper-bag consumption has declined by 50% to 80%.

Cambridge is only one of many cities which have implemented such a policy to promote reusable bag usage. Boston has had a 5-cent minimum fee since 2018 on any checkout bag (including paper) at all retailers. Newton approved a 10-cent fee on checkout bags in July, 2019, which will go into full effect this summer, and Greenfield has a 5-cent minimum charge on bags going into effect in January, 2021.

Outside Massachusetts, cities that have passed fees on paper bags of at least 5 cents include Anchorage, Seattle, Boulder, Chicago, and Portland (Maine). New York City, the largest city in the country, has a 5-cent fee going into effect in March of this year. A 10-cent charge on paper bags went into effect in California in 2016, and a 5-cent equivalent started in Oregon earlier this year.

A fee on paper bags is simple and economical. Store owners need not change their inventory of paper bags. They may simply charge 10 cents for

what they already have. A customer will not lose money by choosing to reuse. A typical durable polyester bag costs between 50 cents and \$2 at Trader Joe's and Whole Foods, for example, or is sometimes complimentary at a plethora of public events. By using such a bag more than five to 10 times, a customer would more than make up the initial outlay for the bag.

As a statutory city (not a town), Cambridge was able to implement a charge on paper bags without opposition at the state level, and the same holds in Boston, Newton, and Greenfield. Massachusetts towns, on the other hand, have typically felt unable to pass such bylaws because the Attorney General's office has rejected proposals which include fees on paper bags, due to their conflict with the Home Rule

Amendment governing town-level policy. The Home Rule Amendment disallows towns from enacting "private or civil law governing civil relationships except as an incident to an exercise of an independent municipal power." According to the Attorney General's office, "when a town bylaw purports to dictate to a retailer what products it must (or must not) charge its customers for, and how



much a retailer must charge for the product, the bylaw fundamentally alters the retailer-customer relationship. Therefore, the proposed bylaw [charging a fee on paper bags] is an enactment of private or civil law governing civil relationships in contravention of the Home Rule Amendment."

The limitations of the Home Rule Amendment, however, can be bypassed by having a town representative request approval for a specific law in the state legislature through home rule petition. If Belmont requests approval for a Belmont-specific law such as the paper bag fee via a petition approved by Town Meeting, then the paper bag fee will not be in contra-

Where to Recycle Plastic Bags

Shaws, 535 Trapelo Road, Belmont
Star Market, 699 Mount Auburn Street,
Cambridge
Target, 550 Arsenal Street, Watertown
Whole Foods Market, including 200
Alewife Brook Parkway, Cambridge

Farther afield, the following supermarkets
have plastic bag recycling bins:

Big Y Foods
Hannaford Bros.
Price Chopper
Roche Brothers
Stop & Shop
Walmart

vention of the Home Rule Amendment. Belmont has submitted successful home rule petitions in the past, including a 2014 petition to issue more liquor licenses.

I have drafted a warrant article detailing this proposal for a town-wide fee on paper bags. The article closely follows the wording of ordinances passed in Cambridge and Newton, and includes definitions and terms present in Belmont's plastic bag ban article. I am in the process of having conversations with Belmont-based businesses and community members to assess the town's receptiveness to such an idea. So far, 94% of polled Town Meeting members have indicated that they would support this initiative, and in a recent meeting, Sustainable Belmont voted unanimously in favor of the idea.

Through this entire process, I have learned a lot about policymaking at the town level and engaging with the community. We have a simple and economical method for helping our environment, and as a lifetime Belmont resident, I am excited to drive this idea forward as much as possible.

Rahul Ramakrishnan is a 2016 Belmont High School graduate and a student at MIT in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering.



RADHA IVENGAR

Lone Tree Hill Cleanup Day

Join us in stewarding Lone Tree Hill! The Belmont Citizens Forum, in conjunction with the Judy Record Conservation Fund, is holding its eighth annual cleanup and trail maintenance day on Saturday, April 25, from 9 AM until noon. Help complete the planting of trees along the Pine Allee, clean up and remove invasive species at the Coal Road area, and pick up trash at the Mill Street parking lot and South Pleasant Street area at the Coal Road kiosk. Students can earn community service credits. This event is made possible by generous local business sponsors.

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 jointly by the town and McLean Hospital through a public/private partnership, and is managed by the Land Management Committee.

For more information, email bcfprogram-director@gmail.com.

Belmont CPC Supports Four Projects

By Margaret Velie

This year, Town Meeting will be considering four projects for Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding. By law, CPA funds are limited to projects for affordable housing, historic resources, open space, and outdoor recreational facilities. Last fall, the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) received seven preliminary applications for funding. Since then, one project was deemed ineligible, and two others were withdrawn. The committee reviewed the remaining four applications and is recommending all four for funding.

Affordable Housing

Feasibility Study for the Redevelopment and Creation of New Affordable Housing Units at Belmont Village

The Belmont Housing Authority is requesting \$173,000 to study the feasibility of creating additional affordable housing at Belmont Village.

Belmont Village is Belmont's only state-subsidized family public housing development. It was built in 1949 for World War II veterans and their families. The nine-acre site contains 100 two-

and three-bedroom units evenly divided among 25 buildings.

The study's goal is to determine the feasibility of adding affordable housing in Belmont, especially accessible one-, two-, and three-bedroom units. Creating affordable housing on publicly owned land is cost effective, as land value is a substantial part of development costs.

Historic Resources

Homer House Window Restoration

The Belmont Woman's Club is requesting \$100,000 to restore 43 inoperable double-hung windows, two stained glass windows, and damaged exterior wood scrolls on the dormers at the William Flagg Homer House.

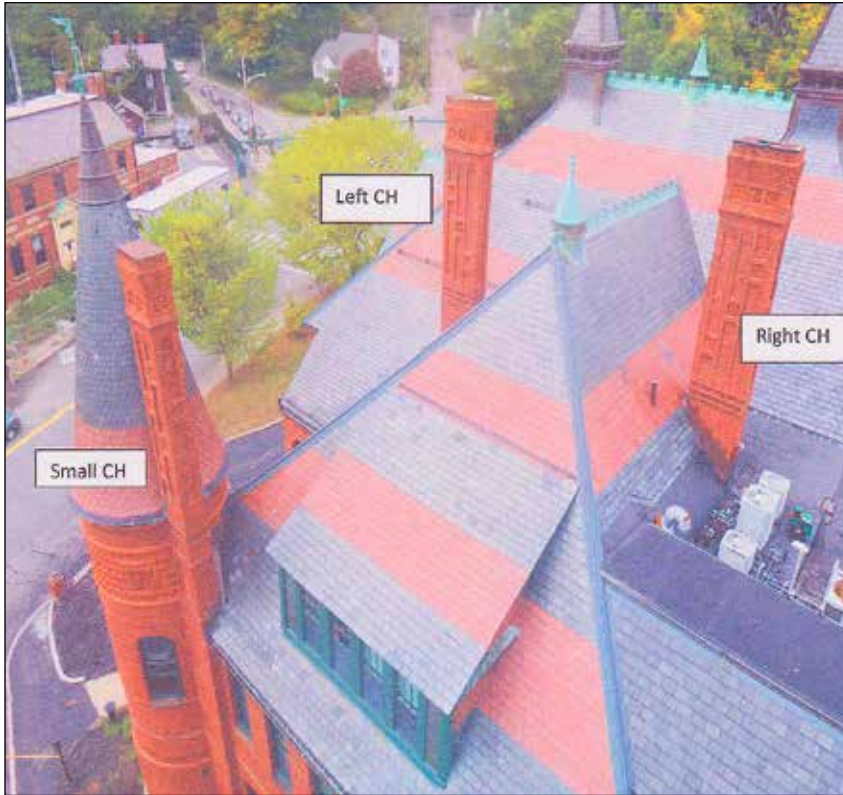
The William Flagg Homer House is in the Pleasant Street Historic District at the corner of Pleasant Street and Concord Avenue. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was built in 1853 as a summer house for Adeline Wellington and William Flagg Homer, the aunt and uncle of American artist Winslow Homer.

The Belmont Woman's Club purchased the stucco house in 1927 to save it from demolition, and has maintained it since then. The club will



MARGARET VELIE

The Homer House, home of the Belmont Woman's Club



Belmont's Town Hall chimneys.

contribute \$10,000 towards the project's total cost of \$110,000.

In May 2013, Town Meeting appropriated \$10,000 in CPA funds to assess the condition of the house and make recommendations for repairs and rehabilitation. The 2014 report, William Flagg Homer House/Belmont Woman's Club Building Survey and Investigation, recommended the window repair and restoration.

The Historic District Commission supports this project.

Town Hall Chimneys

Steve Dorrance, Belmont's facilities director, is seeking \$125,000 to preserve and restore the three chimneys at Belmont Town Hall.

The brick Town Hall was built in 1881 and designed by Boston architect Henry Hartwell. The chimneys are a defining feature of the building, but they have fractured, are missing bricks, and have developed a number of cracks. The project will stabilize the chimneys by repairing the cracks and replacing and realigning the damaged bricks. A waterproof sealer will be applied to the entire exterior of the chimneys.

The CPA committee used \$9,800 in administrative funds to hire Boston Chimney and Tower

to inspect the chimneys and make recommendations for their restoration.

The Historic District Commission supports this project.

Outdoor Recreational Land

Town Field Playground Restoration

The Friends of Town Field Playground are requesting \$680,624 to rehabilitate the more than 20-year-old Town Field Playground plus the adjacent pickleball and basketball courts. The new playground will better serve both children younger than four and children older than eight, and will include an exercise/parkour course.

In May 2018, Town Meeting appropriated \$25,000 to design a new playground for the site. During the design phase, the Department of Public Works determined that the pickleball/tennis and basketball courts

also needed rehabilitation, and expanded the project scope to include them.

In May 2019, once the design was complete, Town Meeting appropriated another \$60,000 in CPA funds to prepare final construction drawings and bid documents for the project. Now that the drawings and bid documents are complete, this year's Town Meeting will be asked to vote on the construction cost. The Friends of Town Field have committed to raising \$25,000 for the project.

Belmont's Department of Public Works and the Recreation Commission both support this project.

This will be Belmont's eighth year funding CPA projects. In the past seven years, Town Meeting has appropriated almost \$10 million for more than 40 projects, including about \$2 million in matching funds from the state.

To read the complete project applications, see Belmont-ma.gov/community-preservation-committee. For general information on the CPA, visit communitypreservation.org.

Margaret Velie is a member of the Belmont Community Preservation Committee.

Lydia Ogilby Remembered



RICHARD CHEEK

Lydia Ogilby on her family's Belmont farmland.

By Neal Winston

Lydia Phippen Ogilby passed away on November 1, 2019, at age 98 at her historic John Bright House on Washington Street, adjacent to the 10-acre Belmont Farm. Living in Belmont from a young age, she was known by townspeople as a spirited preservationist of its heritage and land.

Lydia's strong and generous opinions embodied the Belmont spirit of independence and industriousness of her forebears. Her portrait by Belmont photographer Richard Cheek hangs in Town Hall. She is seen standing in her field, seemingly growing out of the earth, ever vigilant, defying the pressures of development around her. A longtime co-chair of the Belmont Historic District Commission, she reminded many in calls and meetings to preserve our buildings and open space. In 2004, she was honored by the Massachusetts Historical Commission with their Individual Lifetime Achievement Preservation Award.

A direct descendent of Abraham Hill, who received a great deal of Belmont land through a grant from King Charles I in 1634, Lydia was

determined that her family's farm would remain undeveloped for generations to come. She protected it with an Agricultural Restriction in 2002 under the stewardship of the Belmont Land Trust and American Farmland Trust. She stated at the time, "This farm is sacred to me, an ancestral treasure. I wanted to be sure that it would be safe in perpetuity." While remaining privately owned by her family, she noted its presence as a "boon to the community, of having something that is open and beautiful."

The land was cultivated for decades by the Sergi family when it was known as the Richardson Farm, and is now leased from the Ogilby family by Michael Chase who runs the farm as Belmont Acres. A farm stand remains open to the public during the growing season. The Belmont schools also hold student tours and farming demonstrations at the farm.

Others in Belmont who have placed Belmont land under Conservation Restrictions have noted Lydia as their inspiration for their own preservation efforts. Her legacy lives on.

Neal Winston is president of the Belmont Land Trust.

Belmont Roots

Environmental News, Notes, and Events

By Meg Muckenhaupt



Is your workplace letting everyone off for Spring Break this year? I didn't think so. It's just as well. Flying to the Caribbean spews a lot of carbon into the air, and there's so much

to explore at home. Animals are stirring from their winter torpor, buds are subtly swelling, and more than 500,000 herring are preparing to swim up the Mystic River—perhaps to Alewife Brook, named for those very herring. It's fun to watch, and even more fun to watch while recording information that helps us understand our world, and how it is changing.

Winter Forest Explorations

Saturday, March 14, 9:30 AM-noon

Flynn Rink Parking Lot, Medford

Join Earthwise Aware for a biodiversity walk in the Fells exploring how seasons affect and shape our plants and wildlife in our beautiful urban forest. Space is limited. Learn more and register at earthwiseaware.org or contact Claire at citizenscience@earthwiseaware.org.

Mystic Lakes Herring Monitoring Training

Saturday, March 14, 10 AM-noon

Medford Boat Club, 481 Mystic Valley Parkway, Medford

Each spring, over a half-million river herring migrate from the ocean up the Mystic River to the Mystic Lakes and to Horn Pond. You are invited to participate in this spectacular wildlife migration by monitoring the herring once a week for 10 minutes at the Mystic Lakes. Monitoring occurs from 7 AM-7 PM every day during the migration season (April-June). This training will provide all details you need to be a monitor. Register at mysticriver.org or call 781-316-3438

Climate & Wildlife Watch at the Fells

Wednesday, March 18, 9:30 AM-noon

Long Pond Parking Lot, Winchester

The Earthwise Aware Citizen Science group assesses and documents the Middlesex Fells' ecological communities. This is an opportunity to get introduced to EwA's community science program and its team and work on listening, observing, and recording. Space is limited; register to save your place and get location updates. Learn more and register at tinyurl.com/ewa-citizen-science or contact Claire at citizenscience@earthwiseaware.org

Hike to the Vernal Pool

Wednesday, April 15, 10:15-11:45 AM

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

Vernal pools are seasonal bodies of water created by melting snow and spring rains that create a habitat for a wide variety of life including wood frogs, cad-disflies, and fairy shrimp. Join Habitat staff for a trek into the woods to learn more about this incredible ecosystem. \$10 Mass Audubon members, \$14 non-members. To register, see www.massaudubon.org or call 617-489-5050.

2020 Urban Wildlife Quests

Friday, April 24, and Sunday, April 26, 10 AM-noon

Flynn Rink Parking Lot, Medford

Saturday, April 25, 1-3:30 PM

Lusitania Meadow, 250 Fresh Pond Parkway, Cambridge

Earthwise Aware, the Cambridge Water Department, and the Friends of the Fells are participating in this year's in the worldwide 2020 City Nature Challenge. Participants will report their observations using the iNatt app on a mobile device. Space is limited. Learn more and register at ewa-2020-urban-wildlife-quest-at-the-fells.eventbrite.com.

Animals are entertaining, but this column wouldn't be called Belmont Shoots if I didn't talk about plants, at least a little. I'll be quick: native birds, butterflies,

snakes, worms, moths, and foxes co-evolved with native plants. The little caterpillar that grows to be the moth that's caught by the bird that's eaten by the hawk can stand the various chemical disincentives emitted by our local oaks, willows, cherries, and sassafras—but it can't defend itself against the poisons in species from other lands. Grow local plants, and marvel at the life that arrives at your door. For complete details, see BringingNatureHome.net, look up the Xerces Society, or attend the talks by Grow Native Massachusetts or Habitat in April.

Designing with Plant Communities **Wednesday, April 1, 7-8:30 PM**

Cambridge Public Library, 449 Broadway, Cambridge
What happens if we create planting plans focused on complete systems rather than collections of individuals? Join Grow Native Massachusetts to learn how

to create healthy, resilient plant communities that are beautiful and ecologically vibrant. Dan Jaffe will discuss how to select and combine the right species for specific site conditions, and how this community-oriented approach can be applied to plantings of all sizes. For more information, visit the site GrowNative-Mass.org or call 781-790-8921.

Backyards for Biodiversity **Wednesday, April 8, 10:15-11:45 AM**

Mass Audubon Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary, 10 Juniper Road, Belmont
Habitat has been managed to enhance biodiversity of plant and animal species for over a century. Learn from the Habitat story about how to increase biodiversity in your own backyard. \$10 Mass Audubon members, \$14 nonmembers. To register, see www.massaudubon.org or call 617-489-5050.

Call for Nominations: David R. Johnson Preservation Award

The Belmont Historical Society presents awards to individuals or organizations who have made a notable contribution to preserving local structures or land. Each year, the society invites community members to nominate projects or individuals for this award, which is presented at the Belmont Historical Society's Annual Meeting in May.

Michael Smith, the historical society's 2019 award winner, was recognized for his work on preserving the Belmont Police Station and for his decades-long service in preserving other important historic sites in Belmont.

Properties throughout the town, not just in the historic districts, are eligible for nomination. The categories for property nominations are:

- Private residences
- Commercial properties
- Publicly owned properties
- Properties owned by nonprofit institutions
- Landscape projects
- Preservation of open space and land conservation

In addition, nominations for individuals, companies, or institutions that have made significant contributions to historic preservation in Belmont will be considered. We encourage you to look around your neighborhood and our town for projects worthy of such recognition.

The 2020 award nomination form is available at www.belmonthistoricalsociety.org.
Nominations are due by April 30, 2020.

So you abandoned your New Year's resolutions. So what? This is the first day of the rest of your life, and spring is coming. If you need new inspiration to get out and do good in this world, go check out one of the local environmental action days. There's no commitment apart from showing up, and you might find something that inspires you to do more than just show up.

Drawdown EcoChallenge
Wednesday, April 1, 7-8:30 PM

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

Join Mass Audubon's team to take action with climate change solutions! Habitat's team will be using Ecochallenge's social change platform to engage our community in collective action and friendly competition. The evening will include an indoor presentation of actions you can adopt in your own home and community. Register for this free program at www.massaudubon.org or call 617-489-5050.

Thank you to our contributors

WRITERS

Kate Bowen • Rahul Ramakrishnan • Vincent Stanton, Jr • Margaret Velie • Neal Winston

PHOTOS/GRAPHICS

Richard Cheek • Radha Iyengar • Jeff Roth • Clarissa Rowe • Kenneth Stampfer

COPY EDITORS

Sue Bass • Virginia Jordan • Evanthia Malliris

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Sue Bass • Virginia Jordan • Evanthia Malliris • Vincent Stanton, Jr.

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Please visit our website for updates and to read this issue in color: belmontcitizensforum.org.