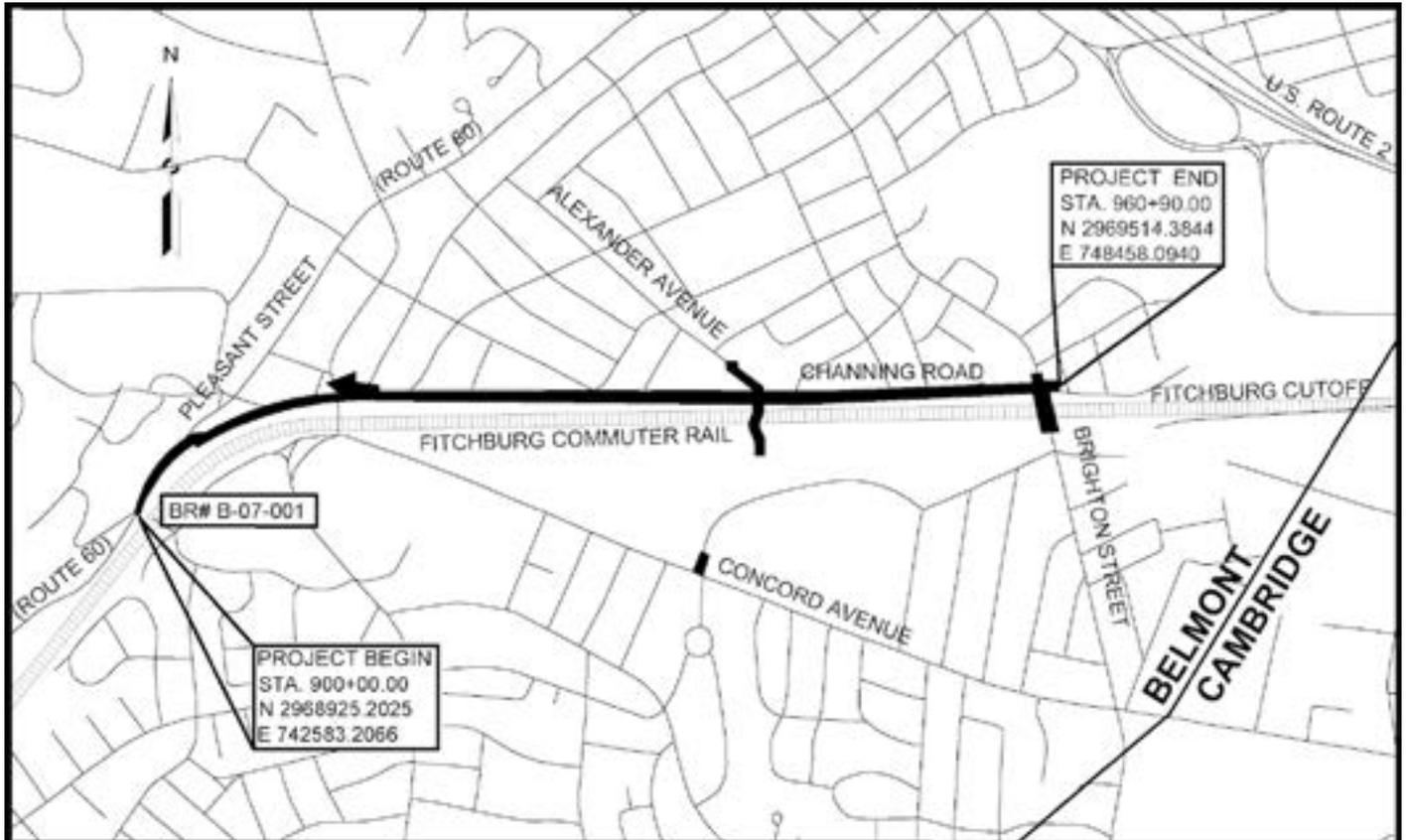




Belmont Citizens Forum

Belmont Community Path Hits Major Milestone

75% Design Plans Delivered to MassDOT



NITSCH ENGINEERING

Map of the future Belmont Community Path (Phase 1) from the 75% design submission.

By Holly Muson and Jeffrey North

On September 10, the design team led by Nitsch Engineering delivered the 75% design submission to the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT). This submission marks a significant step forward for Phase I of the Belmont Community Path.

The 75% design stage means that detailed plans are now largely complete. The submission covers alignment, grading, drainage, fencing, landscaping, and structural components such as the underpass, retaining walls, and other supporting features. This level of design provides MassDOT with the comprehensive materials needed to move the project toward final review, permitting, and construction.

With this milestone, Belmont is now moving toward 100% design. The focus will be on refining details, incorporating agency feedback, finalizing land agreements, and securing environmental permits. MassDOT and its partner agencies will carefully review the submission, and their comments may lead to revisions.

The Belmont Community Path is a critical link in the Massachusetts Central Rail Trail (MCRT). Phase I will extend from the Cambridge line to the Clark Street Bridge, connecting neighborhoods, schools, and regional trail networks. This detailed design submission also allows for more accurate cost estimates and scheduling, ensuring that planners and residents have a clearer picture of what lies ahead.

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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.

The BCF *Newsletter* is published six times a year, in January, March, May, July, September, and November. Published material represents the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the Belmont Citizens Forum.

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

belmontcitizensforum.org

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This milestone demonstrates real progress. After years of planning, surveys, and community discussions, Belmont is closer than ever to realizing the long-awaited Community Path.

FAQ: Belmont Community Path 75% Design

What exactly is the 75% design stage?

It means most engineering details are in place, though fine-tuning and agency feedback will continue until the 100% final design.

Does this mean construction is about to begin?

Not yet. MassDOT must review the submission, finalize right-of-way agreements, and complete permitting before bidding and construction.

What are “structural plans”?

These are detailed engineering drawings of the entire length of the path, including the underpass and the retaining wall, ensuring the path is safe and meets state standards.

When will the path be built?

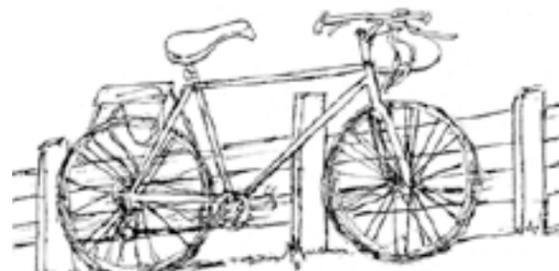
The current schedule indicates that MassDOT (which will supervise the construction process, rather than the town) expects to issue a request for bids in September 2026. After a construction company is selected, the project is expected to take approximately three years to complete, with the underpass work done toward the latter half of the overall schedule. The underpass will be completed and opened for use concurrently with the rest of the path, not earlier.

How can the public stay informed?

Visit BelmontCommunityPath.com for updates and public notices, and see p. 22 of this issue.

Holly Muson is chair of the Community Path Project Committee.

Jeffrey North is managing editor of the BCF Newsletter.



ANN COIT SIFNEOS

Serving Those Who Served

A Conversation with Belmont's Veterans Services Officer

By Jeffrey North

In every community, veterans are our living connection to history, service, and sacrifice. In Belmont, the responsibility for ensuring these neighbors receive the benefits, care, and respect they have earned rests with the town's veterans service officer. For this installment of Vision for a Better Belmont, we sat down with Bob Upton, who leads this initiative, to learn how Belmont supports its veterans, the challenges they face, and how all of us can contribute to building a stronger community for those who have served.



Bob Upton with Robert Young, a 100-year-old veteran, in 2022.

BCF

What led you to become Belmont's veterans service officer (VSO), and how has your own background shaped your approach?

Upton

Eleven years ago, I had the opportunity to accept this role in Belmont to help veterans and their families learn about the benefits to which they are entitled. We at the town of Belmont, the MA Executive Office of Veterans Services, and the Massachusetts Veterans Advocate Office are eager to connect them with these benefits.

In 1970, during the Vietnam War era, I enlisted in the Massachusetts Army National Guard with 10 of my buddies. In 1974, I went on active duty as a Massachusetts National Guard recruiter, serving for six years. During the following years as a member of the guard, I served in many roles, including chief noncommissioned officer of the Massachusetts National Guard Family Program. I retired from the Massachusetts National Guard as a master sergeant with 28 years of service.

Upon retirement, I took on a full-time role as a Department of Defense contractor program specialist for the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration

Program, covering the tristate area of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. My main responsibilities included preparing guard and reserve soldiers and their families for potential mobilizations and active-duty call-ups.

My role as Belmont's Veterans Service officer is, in many ways, a continuation of the duties I held in previous roles.

BCF

What does a typical day look like in your role, and what are some of the lesser-known parts of your work?

Upton

I get to meet with or speak with many of our Belmont veterans and their families to understand their needs, injuries, or illnesses, and connect them to the benefits they may be entitled to. It's essential to help them explore the resources and the help available to them or their family members.

This is the case in every town. Every community has a VSO responsible for its own veterans. We will always offer support, information, and referral to all veterans wherever the need arises.



For example, I recently met with a 35-year-old resident of another town who was working on a local construction project in Belmont. Someone referred him to me for guidance. He had been injured while serving in the military, but he later learned that he had medical issues that he felt were service-connected. I spoke with him about the process of filing a Veterans Administration (VA) claim. I suggested that he reach out directly to his own community VSO and follow up by providing supporting medical documentation to support his claim.

BCF
About how many veterans live in Belmont, and what are their demographics—such as age groups or service eras?

Upton
Today, Belmont has just over 400 veterans who have served in each of our armed forces. Of those, 51 are women (remember, 10,000 nurses served in-country during the Vietnam War).

Most of our living Belmont veterans are of the Vietnam and Gulf War eras (Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm) and the War on Terror. We also have Korea-era and WWII-era veterans, although those older veterans are leaving us every day. The WWII and Korea veterans don't ask for benefits; they will say, "leave the benefits for someone else." The Vietnam era vets come in to

seek help reluctantly. I have had so many instances where I've had to explain and strongly encourage them to consider filing for benefits.

BCF
What are some of the events or activities that help you in your role as the veterans service officer in Belmont?

Upton
Having served in this role as VSO, I have come to know and meet so many wonderful and supportive people who help me with this VSO responsibility. The local VFW, American Legion, and AMVETS leaders have been truly amazing and most helpful in introducing me to their members.

I know that I can count on so many within our leadership and staff employees of Belmont town government throughout the year, but especially when we plan for our recognition events and activities such as Veterans Day, National Purple Heart Day, and Memorial Day. The Cemetery Department and DPW staff have consistently gone above and beyond to ensure that the burial grounds are well-maintained and groomed. I know that I can rely upon them for their full support. It truly is a community effort.

BCF
What services, benefits, or assistance can local veterans and their families access through your office or outreach efforts?

Upton
Recently, the Veterans Services Office has been relocated to the Beech Street Center. I conduct interviews there, meet with veterans, or set appointments with clients in advance whenever possible. I encourage veterans or their family members to call my office with questions or inquiries at 617-993-2725.

We host a monthly coffee hour at the Beech Street Center, where we gather socially with 15 to 30 veteran attendees regularly. The regulars include a few World War II veterans, a few Korean War veterans, and some Vietnam War veterans. We have had two female veterans attend, and we hope that more will take the time to join us.

We don't see many younger vets; however, they know we're here. We're making the effort to reach

out to them directly and would really welcome their attendance. Understandably, the coffee hour takes place during work hours, which may not be practical for working-age veterans.

At these events, we learn about those who might need help. We encourage them to enroll in the VA health care system, obtain their VA card, and initiate the claim process if necessary. At times, a significant amount of paperwork or supporting documentation is required, but I am always happy to assist when possible.

Specific examples of direct assistance include legal, financial, housing, health care, and medical reimbursement services. Once a veteran or surviving spouse is deemed eligible, benefits are provided by the town through Chapter 115, our state's benefits and safety net program.

Veterans and their families may access additional benefits and entitlements through the state and the VA, such as health care, disability compensation, hearing aids, eyeglasses, long-term care, burial assistance, and other available services.

BCF
How do you coordinate with the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services, the VA, and nearby towns?

Upton
I attend monthly area VSO online or in-person meetings, quarterly regional meetings of the Northeast Veterans Services Officers Association, and annual meetings of the Massachusetts VSO Association. The VA offers many additional educational and training opportunities and regularly sends informational updates and newsletters.

BCF
What are the most pressing needs or challenges Belmont veterans face today?

Upton
Their needs vary, and they cover the full spectrum of needs, including medical and financial assistance, as well as referrals to other service providers. There has been a spike in the need for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) care for

Vietnam-era vets, and many vets need medication cost reimbursement. Belmont vets might not qualify for some benefits based on financial eligibility, but their service-connected disability, if authorized by the VA, is covered. As a VSO, it's important to build strong relationships and establish a level of trust necessary to facilitate the work of connecting veterans to their benefits.

BCF
Are there programs or benefits you wish more veterans knew about or used?

Upton
There are numerous resources offered by the state and the VA at the federal level. Our coffee hour is a great on-ramp or a good way for veterans to come and learn more. Although many of the needs of veterans are common to many, there are those needs that are specific to the individual. I encourage veterans to contact me directly.

BCF
If you could wave a magic wand, what would you most like to add or change in Belmont's Veterans Services?



Upton

The ability to reach more vets, raise the awareness of the vet community, and find more ways to show our appreciation for their service and sacrifice. I am always looking for volunteers to help support this effort.

One example of veterans helping or recognizing other veterans is that of a very special out-of-towner—a Vietnam-era veteran who came to me to ask if he could help identify all the veterans buried in our Grove Street and Highland Meadow Cemeteries.

Of course, we already have that database to start the process, but it was a great offer to provide this help!

This gentleman voluntarily spent a significant amount of time cataloging, identifying, and photographing every service member's gravesite. He then uploaded all this detailed information, along with the photographs, to FindaGrave.com so that families can visit and honor their loved ones.

BCF

How can schools, youth groups, or civic organizations connect more meaningfully with veterans?

Upton

All of our Belmont schools, and the Belmont Hill School, support our veteran community. Patriotic music programs held at Belmont's elementary schools during the holidays are well-attended and greatly appreciated by our veterans. Some have even said it makes them feel like "rock stars"! The very talented B-Flats choral group from Belmont Hill School performs annually at our Memorial Day Breakfast at the Beech Street Center.

Every year, leading up to the Memorial Day holiday, Belmont High School student-athletes help place more than 2,500 US flags on the gravesites of our community's fallen heroes. It's a long-held tradition and a tribute to the sacrifices made by so many.

In 2024, the Belmont Hill School established its very own Veterans Club. They came to me to ask for my help and to ask how they could support our veterans. This small group of students took it upon themselves to organize a 5K road race and raised over \$5,000 in its very first year. They've already built relationships with both the Belmont Veterans

Memorial Committee and VFW Post 1272 here in Belmont.

Belmont Scouting has always been a great supporter and participant in our programs to honor and appreciate veterans and their families. I have always enjoyed working with them and encourage them to reach out to me for more information about military service or Eagle Scout projects.

BCF

If you could share one message directly with the people of Belmont about veterans and their role in the community, what would it be?

Upton

I would strongly encourage more of our veterans or their family members to reach out to me directly. Only a very small percentage of the overall population has served in the military, but here in Belmont, I know that they are being honored and appreciated.

This is a well-supported 20-hour-per-week position, and I've learned how to work with others to get things done. It's a great job, helping people. It's very gratifying. It feels good to be able to do something worthwhile for people, for our veterans. We owe our veterans because they made and kept their commitment to us. They raised their right hand and took that oath to preserve, protect, and defend the American constitution. That's a bond we all share as veterans, and we respect that here in Belmont.

For A Better Belmont

Belmont's veterans are part of the fabric of our town—neighbors, friends, mentors, and quiet keepers of extraordinary stories. As Bob Upton reminds us, honoring their service means more than just ceremonial observances; it means ensuring that support is accessible, needs are heard, and contributions are valued every day. By learning more about the challenges veterans face and the resources available, each of us can play a role in creating a Belmont where those who served our nation feel fully at home.

Rock Meadow Lacks a Conservation Restriction

By Dan Nolan

A pastoral gem in Belmont, Rock Meadow is in full splendor each fall as the leaves turn, providing a backdrop for Instagram posts, family holiday cards, and yearbook photos. It's a treasure year-round for people, animals, pollinators, and the entire ecosystem it shares with the rest of the Western Greenway. What it doesn't share is the same level of protection.

As the crow flies, the deer trots, and the water flows, the land is all connected. The Belmont Conservation Commission is seeking to strengthen that connection by providing Rock Meadow with the same level of enduring protection as the adjoining Lone Tree Hill and Beaver Brook Reservation lands: a conservation restriction.

The Swiss cheese model of protection

Federal and state laws form a critical framework for conservation, but local protections are essential to supplement and enhance that framework. Having layers of safeguards helps ensure that the holes in one layer are covered by another.

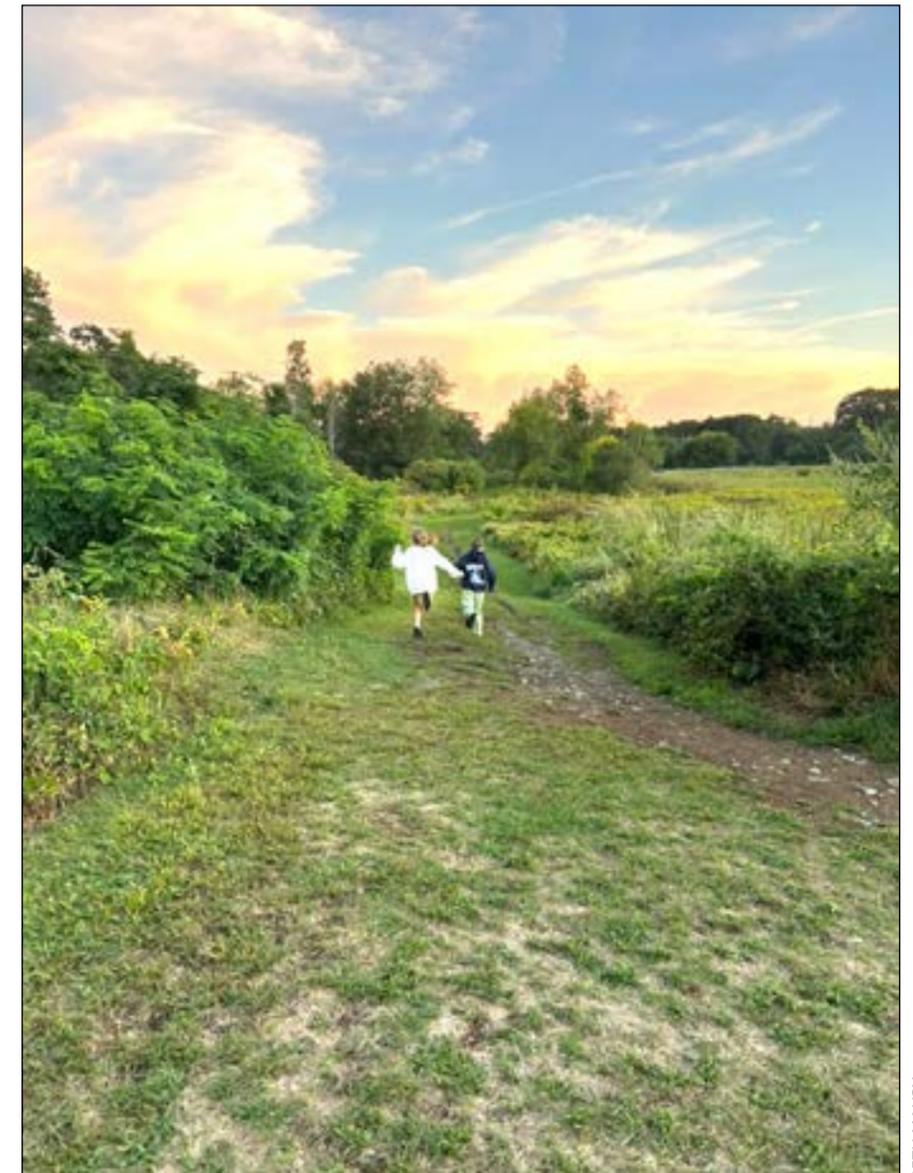
Where local government fails to provide protection, the federal government can step in to offer protection. Many critical environmental laws have the federal Interstate Commerce Clause of the US Constitution as their basis, including the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and Endangered Species Act, to name a few.

Unfortunately, the federal government vacillates and has proven to be an unreliable steward of the environment. Federal protections can be weakened, as demonstrated in the recent Supreme Court decision (*Sackett v. EPA*, 2023), which limits the definition of wetlands under the

Clean Water Act. While this decision will have a drastic ecological impact in several states, it will have a lesser effect on the wetlands and dependent ecosystems of Massachusetts due to our strong state Wetlands Protection Act, which is enforced locally by municipal conservation commissions. Strong local action ensures that protections endure when broader laws falter.

Protection on the state and local levels

Although Rock Meadow is already conservation land under Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution, its deed does not carry a conser-



Rock Meadow.

BETH MAURY



Bee at the Victory Gardens.

vation restriction as Lone Tree Hill and Beaver Brook Reservation in Waltham do. Why? Belmont bought the property from McLean Hospital in 1968. Massachusetts passed the Conservation Restriction Act in 1969. (So close . . .)

The conservation restrictions on Lone Tree Hill and Beaver Brook came decades later, when those properties were purchased (Lone Tree Hill) or designated conservation land (Beaver Brook). The BCC is now seeking to close that gap, ensuring that Rock Meadow remains protected in perpetuity like the adjacent lands of the Western Greenway.

Article 97 sets the bar for conservation of critical open space. But conservation restrictions are widely regarded as the gold standard for protecting conservation land. They prevent development or other uses that are inconsistent with conservation while allowing for passive recreation and the protection of habitats.

Establishing such a restriction for Rock Meadow would not alter the current use of the land; these allowable uses can be written into the deed. Rather, it would ensure that its character cannot be compromised by future pressures or shifting priorities. All of this is consistent with the protections covering

the connected conservation and passive recreation lands.

Conservation restrictions address finances

Rock Meadow is a rare and valuable landscape. Open meadows in eastern Massachusetts are increasingly scarce, yet they provide essential habitat for ground-nesting birds, pollinators, and diverse plant communities.

Historically, the meadow was sustained by Indigenous burning practices and later by grazing livestock from McLean Hospital. Since Belmont acquired the land, the meadow has been maintained through mowing, a process

that is costly and requires consistent funding. Absent maintenance in one way or another, the surrounding woodlands would swallow the meadow, radically changing the appearance of the land and the function of the ecosystem.

To address this, the Judith K. Record Endowment has offered Belmont a substantial matching fund to support Rock Meadow's maintenance—on the condition that the town first establishes a conservation restriction. Last year, Town Meeting authorized funding to pursue this step. The Conservation Commission is now working with The Trustees of Reservations, experts in conservation restrictions, to draft the legal document and shepherd it through state approval. Final adoption will require votes from the Select Board and Town Meeting.

When complete, Rock Meadow will share the same protection as Lone Tree Hill and Beaver Brook Reservation, ensuring that this ecological treasure and community asset remains what it has been for centuries: meadowland for nature and for Belmont.

Keep Rock Meadow meadow.

Dan Nolan is a member of the Belmont Conservation Commission.

Opinion Service in Belmont

By Angus Abercrombie

One of the greatest assets of our community is the many residents who take time out of their busy schedules to work on bettering our town. Some choose to serve on public bodies, some coach youth sports, and others dedicate their time to the numerous nonprofits making Belmont and its surrounding communities even stronger. That we see, time after time, our neighbors take on these noble efforts instills a valuable trust in shared values of the town.

There is a distinct need for this work, both to complete tasks and to sustain our community's character. It is therefore essential to seek out and address obstacles that might discourage participation in these programs and efforts. This spirit of volunteerism is something that we now struggle to impart to younger community members—a troubling trend that threatens many of the institutions and connections that make the Belmont we know and love today.

I'm not alone in having begun my volunteering journey at an age when I was more likely to get in the way than actually help out. Whether it was showing up for volunteer days at Habitat or supporting my parents when they were called into service by the Winn Brook Parent Teacher Association, the idea that some portion of my time would be devoted to uncompensated, beneficial work was never foreign to me.

I found this early exposure important. By the time I entered middle school, it had built the connections that meant I knew exactly what I wanted to do to fulfill my mandatory community service requirement. At the same time, I'd seen how showing up and helping out for just a few hours a month can have a tangible impact in the long term. By high school, I had established relationships with community organizations that had benefited my own upbringing, thereby presenting excellent opportunities to give back through time and, once I started working, money. Filling the 40-hour requirement with meaningful work was a simple task, one I completed within my first year.

This is the experience of many young people in our schools, but it diverges sharply from that of their peers who are not given the support and opportunity to develop the community relations

that drive a long-running commitment to volunteerism. Crucially, since I left the Chenery Middle School, now Chenery Upper Elementary, the community service requirement for grades five through 8 has been eliminated. As a result, preteens aren't introduced to community organizations and service opportunities.

Without these relationships, it is much more likely that upon reaching high school, students will view the 40-hour requirement as an unwelcome chore rather than as an intrinsically motivated service. Additionally, during my time at the high school, students could get credit for community service by contributing items or funds to food drives and other school-sponsored charitable efforts. This sends precisely the wrong message. The idea that one's obligations to their community can be quickly paid off with a large enough check is not a principle we should teach in Belmont's public schools.

It is essential that we improve our middle and high school community service programs for Belmont's service culture, one that recognizes people's volunteer time as essential to both the projects they support and the bonds that hold our community together. We should reinstate a requirement for student volunteering in the seventh and eighth grades while also ensuring that policy blocks students from exempting themselves with food and monetary and donations. This change will

Write for the BCF Newsletter!

The Belmont Citizens Forum is looking for writers at all experience levels and all ages. The *BCF Newsletter* covers local and regional issues including environmental protection, historic preservation, economic development, transportation, bicycling and pedestrian safety, and town planning and zoning.

What would YOU like to write about?

Please contact us to discuss your ideas for an article. We can help you refine your topic, assist your locating resources, and provide writer coaching. The byline will be yours.

Email bcfprogramdirector@gmail.com with your name, contact info, and a few sentences about what you'd like to write.

help young Belmont residents build meaningful connections with community groups and find volunteer opportunities that bring them value long after they have completed their service requirement.

Most Belmont students expect that upon their graduation from Belmont High School, they will enroll in a college. Many will travel across the country, if not further, to seek out prestigious programs in their chosen fields. This speaks to the level of academic excellence that some Belmont students achieve, but it creates an additional problem for the community groups they are involved in. I've been a part of many organizations that see massive fluctuations in engagement from young residents as a few excited high schoolers become a major part of their programs, before leaving the state for four years, if not longer.

Belmont has a striking demographic divide, with less than half as many residents in the 20 to 29 age bracket as between the ages of 10 and 19. This is a result of both the expectations for college education and career success, and of the troubling lack of affordability in Belmont. Young professionals deeply tied to Belmont's institutions and community find few affordable spaces in town.

The power of having organizations that a person knows, appreciates, and has experience with is unmatched in mobilizing that person to help out in the community. When we push young professionals out of Belmont, we lose people who are deeply invested in the town.

At the same time, for the high schoolers who are looking at whether it is worth investing their time and energy in advancing through an organization, whether to begin new projects and take a major role in existing ones, we give them absolutely no confidence that they will be able to see those through to their conclusion. Very little in government, advocacy, or community programming can truly be accomplished in only a couple of years. Engagement is discouraged when young people are unable to develop long-term relationships and trust that those connections will endure for years to come.

I think there is a common sentiment that Belmont is feeling increasingly disconnected. High residential and business turnover, demographic shifts, and simple changes in how people go about their daily lives are all contributing to this feeling. One of the best antidotes are the incredible organizations and institutions that give Belmont residents

an opportunity to come together to serve our neighbors. These groups provide an opportunity to bridge economic, social, and intergenerational divides.

Our current policies have made it tougher to instill the value of volunteer work. Relatively simple fixes to how our schools treat community service could make real progress here. At the same time, if we truly want to rebuild the solid base of young people engaged in service organizations and projects in Belmont, we will need to tackle issues like affordability and displacement. Without giving young people a chance to invest their time in our town, we cannot ask them to engage in service.

Angus Abercrombie is a Precinct 8 Town Meeting member and a member of the Belmont Conservation Commission.



Griffin and Ryan Gosse with Miyawaki forest plants.

Miyawaki Forest Planted at Belmont Middle and High School

On Saturday, October 4, dozens of volunteers of all ages gathered at Belmont Middle and High School to plant a Miyawaki forest, also known as a mini forest. (See "[Belmont's First Miyawaki Forest Comes to BHS](#)," BCF Newsletter, July 2025.) They planted 1,400 native tree and shrub seedlings on 3,000 square feet—about the size of a public swimming pool. Photos by Jeffrey North.



MyRWA Protects and Restores Mystic Watershed

Our Environmental Stewards: Patrick Herron, Mystic River Watershed Association



Patrick Herron.

The Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) has been a leader in restoring and protecting one of the most urbanized watersheds in New England. There are 44 lakes and ponds within the watershed, with its headwaters beginning in Reading and flowing to Boston Harbor. From ecological restoration and climate resilience projects to education, community engagement, and policy advocacy, MyRWA has built a reputation for turning data and public participation into lasting change.

The Belmont Citizens Forum spoke with Patrick Herron, executive director of MyRWA, about the challenges and opportunities of protecting the Mystic River and its 21 communities. Jeffrey North conducted the interview. Additional material from this interview is available at the BCF's website, BelmontCitizensForum.org.

Environmental Initiatives

BCF

How would you describe the most pressing environmental challenges facing the Mystic River watershed today?

Herron

We face a number of significant environmental challenges operating at different scales.

At the municipal level, our biggest issue is underinvestment in the infrastructure maintenance needed to protect our waterways from sewage and bacterial contamination. Our cities contribute to elevated pollution in waterways, negatively impacting downstream communities.

Our car culture also contributes to pollution that affects both the air we breathe and our rivers, as a significant portion of tire residue washes off roads and into local waterways.

Finally, the global issue of climate change is driving

flooding, drought, and extreme heat in urban areas. These pose risks and necessitate even greater municipal investments to protect our residents and precious environmental resources.

BCF

How does MyRWA's work intersect with climate resilience, particularly flood mitigation, heat reduction, and habitat restoration?

Herron

Watershed organizations like ours have historically focused on the hydrologic cycle—the movement of water—which is now profoundly affected by climate change. Our current work concentrates on building regional capacity, including public support, funding, and policy initiatives. These efforts are designed to implement nature-based solutions to environmental problems and foster collaborations that can bring these solutions to scale.

We are very proud of our successful effort to unite 20 municipalities in the Resilient Mystic Collaborative to undertake this work regionally, achieving cost savings, shared learning, and larger,

more impactful projects. We are actively implementing stormwater wetlands, planting trees, removing invasives, and restoring wetland habitats. From Reading to Everett, these projects are making our areas more resilient to a changing climate. This wouldn't be possible without our incredible partners, who share the credit for this vital work.

BCF

Can you share highlights of MyRWA's ecological restoration projects and how they are improving biodiversity and water quality?

Herron

Our restoration projects are rooted in returning natural processes to places where they have been collectively undermined. In Reading, we recently completed a stormwater wetland that is settling out pollutants, allowing water to infiltrate, and providing great opportunities for passive recreation.

In Woburn, we're working to restore function to a paved-over wetland and reestablish fish passage for river herring to Horn Pond.

We are also collaborating with Everett to plant thousands of trees at a wetland site along the river and throughout the city streets.

These projects promote a natural hydrologic cycle and provide habitat for native species, a process that requires gentle maintenance to promote natives and deter invasive plants.

BCF

What role do scientific monitoring and data collection play in shaping MyRWA's environmental priorities?

Herron

Scientific monitoring and data collection identify the sources of pollution and center the residents being impacted by it. For example, we've collected a tremendous amount of data on pollution from Belmont, down through the Little River and Alewife Brook, to pinpoint pollution sources. We've found significant chronic sources hitting the brook daily alongside acute, massive inputs of pollutants from combined sewer overflow (CSO) events.

Looking downstream, we see an environmental justice community that is severely impacted. In fact, our sampling shows that sites like Alewife Brook, Malden River, and Mill Creek in Chelsea

all emerge as locations with high pollutant loads, with vulnerable populations being exposed. This monitoring shines a light on the problem, challenges our assumptions, and forms the basis for how we prioritize our resources.

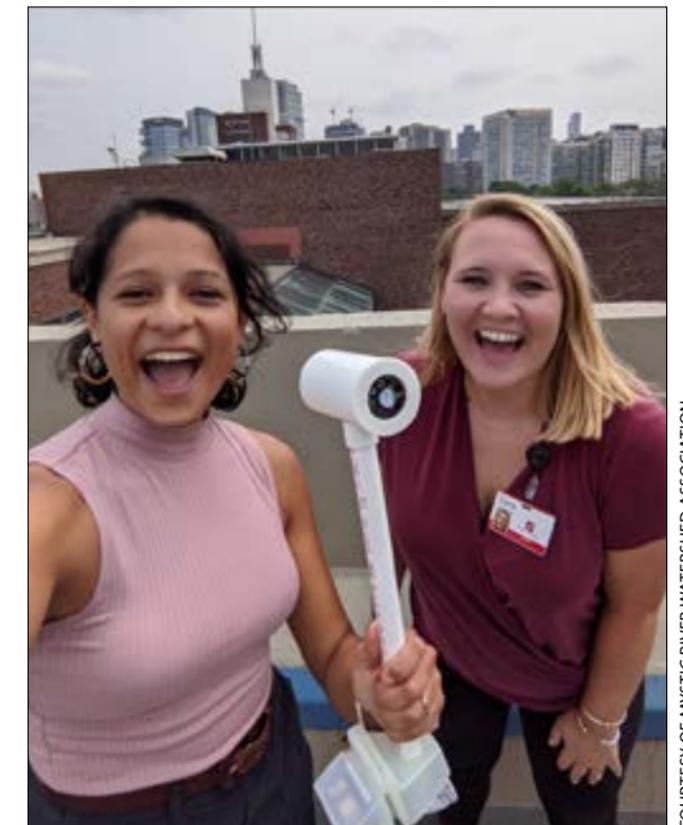
Educational Initiatives

BCF

MyRWA has an active education program. How do you introduce students and teachers to the watershed, and what impact have you seen on youth engagement?

Herron

Our K-12 education program brings real-world science into classrooms across 19 watershed communities, connecting students to the nature in their backyards and the ecological issues that impact their families. Our educators develop learning experiences that examine hyperlocal problems, such as how water quality affects biodiversity, methods to prevent stormwater runoff using green infrastructure, and ways people can help minimize the impact of climate change.



MyRWA climate monitors Melanie Carter (left) and Sarah Benson (right) in 2022.



Similarly, our climate team employs high school youth to help engage and educate residents throughout the watershed about climate impacts and the benefits of trees at tabling events and community workshops. As part of our stewardship program, we also host various youth groups in the field to remove invasive species and pick up trash in urban parks. Over the past few years, as our outreach and education on these issues have grown, we've seen more youth support for our work than ever before.

BCF

Could you describe partnerships with schools, universities, or youth programs that have been particularly effective?

Herron

As part of our Stormwater Collaborative initiative, we partner with a dozen communities across the watershed to bring education on storm-

water runoff to students in the classroom. We've worked with schools in Medford, Somerville, and Everett for the past several years as part of this work, often challenging students to think of ways to protect the waterways near their school from runoff.

Students adopt storm drains near their schoolyard, build models of storm drain systems, and create public service announcements on the problem of runoff. Our educators also collaborate with our water quality team to introduce the numerous on-the-ground projects we lead in partnership with these communities, such as installing stormwater trenches and designing constructed wetlands, through this curriculum.

As we visit these schools year after year, we're reintroducing the concept of stormwater in a new way by incorporating these engineering concepts into lessons to inspire students to think outside the box.

BCF

The Mystic watershed includes diverse urban communities. How does MyRWA work toward equitable access to the river and its green spaces?

Herron

Physical and social factors determine the accessibility of all open spaces, and the Mystic and its wonderful riverine parks are no exception. Physically, this means advocating for and working with stakeholders to ensure paths and water access points are ADA-compliant; that our water and lands are clean and welcoming for recreational use; and that major roadways adjacent to the river have dedicated crossings for people outside of motor vehicles to ensure safe egress. Socially, we advocate for the creation of inclusive spaces regardless of age, demographic background, or level of exposure to the outdoors. On the ground, this means posting signage in the multiple languages spoken by community members, working with affinity groups to host culturally relevant events, and offering programming for first-time explorers of the Mystic. We recently completed our third year of Canoe mobile activities, which bring students from nearby schools, many of whom were on the water for the very first time, onto the river in giant canoes.

BCF

Belmont is part of the Mystic watershed. What role can Belmont residents play in supporting MyRWA's mission?

Herron

Residents who identify with our mission of creating a healthy watershed can engage with their leadership, such as the Select Board and Town Meeting members, to support investments in municipal infrastructure that will prevent the release of sewage into the Alewife Brook subwatershed. There are no magic bullets beyond a competent town engineer and Department of Public Works, which Belmont has. The most critical need is additional dollars invested in the challenge. Other ways to get involved include participating in MyRWA events and volunteer opportunities and making a financial donation. We'll put it to good use to create a healthy river and watershed.

Public Policy and Advocacy

BCF

MyRWA has been active in advocating for stronger environmental protections. What policy victories are you most proud of?

Herron

One of our recent policy victories that resonates today is the work we did with the Massachusetts Rivers Alliance on the CSO notification bill. This bill, which became law in 2021, has required agencies and municipalities to notify area communities and the public about the frequency and volume of sewage discharges. We've had years and years of untreated sewage in CSOs being released into our waters. While we had gained some limited attention, once the notifications required by law started going out, we had the television and radio



coverage, and many more residents became aware of the problem. It's shed a light on the issue as we push for the next investment to eliminate CSOs on Alewife Brook and Mystic River.

BCF

What are the major policy priorities for MyRWA today, locally, at the state level, and/or federally?

Herron

Our top focus at the state level is the Mass Ready Act, also known as the Environmental Bond Bill. This is a "must pass" bill that comes around every five or so years, and it sets the limits for how much money the Commonwealth can borrow to invest in improving our environment, open spaces, and climate resilience. The Healey-Driscoll administration submitted a strong bill to the legislature this summer, and we continue to advocate for changes that will strengthen key authorizations for the Mystic, such as \$500 million for the MVP climate resilience grant program and LINK about \$1.5 billion in total for DCR facilities, parkways, dams, and tree planting. As a "must pass" bill, we are also advocating for the legislature to tack on other important bills that would dedicate revenue to protect nature, eliminate CSO discharges by 2050, climate-proof our building code, streamline permitting for restoration projects, and reduce plastics and rat poison in our environment.

At the federal level, we recently submitted comments standing firmly against attempts by the Trump administration's EPA to roll back federal authority to regulate greenhouse gases, or what Michael Muir aptly calls "planet-heating air pollution from dirty energy sources."

BCF

What advice would you give to town leaders or state legislators who want to make better policy for rivers and watersheds?

Herron

Your average voter or constituent expects that we are building our public infrastructure and private developments to be resilient to climate change. It's only when disaster hits that they will realize we are not, at least not systematically, and they won't be pleased. So be a champion for climate resilience. Increase investments in climate resilience and open spaces, update your zoning bylaws and infrastructure design standards, and listen to your most vulnerable constituents and the organizations that serve them and act on what you hear.

Looking Ahead

BCF

What challenges do you foresee in securing sustainable funding for watershed restoration and advocacy?

Herron

One major challenge has been the rollback of financial commitments from the federal government that move forward big, impactful projects. Earlier this year, the federal government cancelled a \$50M award for restoration and climate resilience in Chelsea and Everett: it was a project that protected \$30 for every \$1 invested. On a smaller scale, but relevant to the heart and soul of our rivers, we've seen funding for our fish passage work cut back dramatically. The second challenge is the competing financial priorities for our watershed communities, from schools, to police, to you name it. Sometimes the environment has been lost in the shuffle and not prioritized. I'll say that, on a positive note, advocacy has always been funded by monies donated by residents, and as long as we have a functioning economy and people who care about the environment and are aware of our work, we should be able to make progress.

BCF

What innovative approaches—technical, social, or political—are you most excited about for the future of the Mystic River?

Herron

We're excited to be exploring ways we can help build social resilience in the watershed. As we face multiple crises—climate change, political division, social isolation, health care cuts, and housing affordability—how can MyRWA, through our on-the-ground projects, programming, and partnerships, help build more connected communities and make our health and housing systems more resilient to extreme weather? Imagine climate-resilient community centers and open spaces that draw neighbors in for fun and engaging programming, as well as health and social services for everyday needs, but activate as hubs to provide extra support when extreme weather strikes. Familiar places and familiar faces can ease the burden in unprecedented times.

At the same time, we are exploring how technology can help forecast when extreme heat or flooding is coming our way and get that information out to decision-makers and the public in the languages and communications channels people are already using. We're working with artists to help cut through the noise and make climate preparedness information more accessible.

BCF

Looking ahead 10 or 20 years, what is your vision for the Mystic watershed if MyRWA's initiatives succeed?

Herron

A vision for this watershed is a place that is welcoming, resilient, and free of pollution. Imagine a place where residents of all backgrounds could live, feel welcomed, visit well-maintained local parks that were well full of nature, and swim in a river without worrying about whether sewage was dumped in it. That is a future that all of us should fight for.

Patrick Herron is the executive director of the Mystic River Watershed Association.

Jeffrey North is the managing editor of the Belmont Citizens Forum Newsletter.

Profiles in Belmont: Andrew Mountford

By Elissa Ely

Twenty-three years ago, I sent my child off to Burbank Elementary School. I had moist eyes. She had a yogurt, a few pretzels, a single Oreo, and a bag of carrots, which returned unopened several hours later.

She moved through the grades and the years mostly uncomplainingly. What enchanted her, though, was the Belmont Before and After School Program (BASP). She wanted to be the first dropped off each morning and the last picked up each night. Staff must have worried about her home life.

The head teacher at BASP was square-shouldered, frank-eyed, and pony-tailed; contagiously energetic, yet cheerfully patient. The ponytail is gone now, and the program he founded has enlarged in every direction, but 23 years later, Andrew Mountford—founder and executive director of the Belmont After School Enrichment Collaborative (BASEC)—is just as frank-eyed, energetic, and patient. A dozen profiles should be written about him, and someone needs to patent his personality.

BASEC out-of-school programs run in Burbank Elementary (why not all?), Chenery Middle and Belmont High Schools, as well as in two Maynard schools, throughout school, school vacations, and summers. During the academic year, doors open from 7:30 to 8:30 in the morning, and again from 2:30 to 5:30 in the afternoon. Last year, all combined, around 800 kids were enrolled.

Childhood must be tended with care. Over 100 BASEC "curriculum specialists", educators—including high school students—and staff take their philosophy of development seriously. Along with Andrew, they believe that structured, nurturing interactions with adults and peers affect neurodevelopment in positive ways (trauma theory has sadly proven that the opposite is also true). The deliberate



Andrew Mountford.

COURTESY OF ANDREW MOUNTFORD

emphasis is on collaboration, conflict resolution, organizational and problem-solving skills, social awareness, and self-awareness.

Traditional activities like sports, theater, martial arts, and creative arts co-exist with less traditional activities: naturalist training, crank-operated theater creation, ukulele lessons, improvisation performance, makerspace studies, calligraphy, and a model UN. Lesson plans are created and executed, so that what used to be a form of babysitting has become a form of multi-level enrichment, led by deeply involved educators. BASEC is on a mission to prepare children in the present for what lies ahead in the future.

We all come from somewhere, and after childhood ends, that place still informs us. Andrew grew up in small-town Maine. There were no before or after school programs, though there was a pricey summer camp nearby that even the wealthiest local

families could not afford. Nonetheless, in the rural freedom of nature, he says, “we had the experience of summer camp every day.”

He was a sociable, conscientious kid, eager to avoid a career in the local mills or lumber company. From early on, his plan was escape, maybe through the lucrative path of lawyering. At Brandeis, he majored in politics and spent a semester in Washington studying public policy. Working in a small law firm that specialized in criminal defense, the future lawyer arrived with “visions of bringing justice,” but left realizing that most of the young associates were weighted to the ground by their early thirties. His law school applications went on hold.

Many part-time jobs followed, including working for years as a vendor in Fenway Park (packets of peanuts are sometimes still tossed his way during games, by former colleagues who recognize him). He never envisioned a life in teaching, but a stint as a teaching aide in Burbank Elementary School changed that. It led to a Master’s degree in Education, to BASP. At 26, still working on his graduate degree, he became the BASP Director. “This is my career,” he realized. “It’s meaningful. I like it.”

These days, directing an enormously expanded and altered program, Andrew spends much of his time thinking about children, teachers, and the way each learns from the other. “Kids have to learn the world with peers,” he says. “They have to run into problems and learn the rewards of solving them with other people.” It’s a form of teaching laid down brick by brick, and the roof can’t come before the foundation.

Tiny understandings are necessary before grand ones are possible. Kids need repetition; taking on small behaviors and interactions again and again before they can begin to understand why they (and everyone, for that matter) act as they do. “We don’t understand ourselves,” he says. “We get grabbed by something, easily captured by bad ideas. We’re captured—and manipulated—by the machine that’s the internet and social media. It’s a horribly difficult time for kids with phones. But the great thing is, ideas can be changed. Human beings have solved huge challenges over the years.”

It goes without saying that cell phones are not allowed during BASEC hours. (It also goes without

saying that this is more of a challenge with Apple watches.)

BASEC is not the pricey summer camp that still runs in his home town. “We don’t have 150 acres with ponds and an archery range,” he says. “But what we don’t have in space, we have in great educators.” He lobbies hard to protect them with wages and benefits; close to 40 employees are full-time and salaried. “What we do is far different than what anyone else does. Ours is the model for creating a pathway to full-time work at a livable wage. No one can afford to work 20-24 hours a week and still live. You have to value the service appropriately.”

The BASEC Board has understood this. “I’m lucky to be in a community open to a progressive philosophy around employment,” he says. “Board members embrace this. It took no convincing. To me, this is the future.”

The role is now 99% administrative, a blessing for BASEC, but a loss for the personal contact with children that Andrew cherishes. He misses Halloween, when the kids would collaborate on—which is to say, argue, vote, construct, costume, name and transport—a scarecrow for the town-wide contest in the nearby mall. “I loved the creative part of it, saying ‘you tell me how we’re gonna solve this.’” Losing that has been a heartache.

Instead, he’s on-site two days a week; working with students, but also working with teachers. “I’m always thinking with them about how to have a bigger impact on kids. They have to be open to feedback themselves, reflective, making changes. Then they can engage kids more consistently and deeply.”

A few years ago, Andrew’s family moved back to small-town Maine. In their tiny community, there is no BASEC. When the school day is done, his children play outside, read, paint, swim, ski in winter, visit; they create their own version of out-of-school programming. They have no cell phones, and their father plans to hold off on iPads until they turn 14, 16, maybe 18 years old. But one must also be a realist. “18,” he says, “is probably pushing it.”

Elissa Ely is a community psychiatrist.

Who Built the Homer House?

By John Beaty

The William Flagg Homer House is a Belmont story with two mysteries. The first mystery is who was the architect who designed and built the Homer House. The second mystery is who William Flagg Homer was and how he provided the resources to acquire the land, hire an architect, and build this magnificent home.

The Homer House is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (1979) and has been a focal point in Belmont’s Pleasant Street Historic District. It is especially interesting because the artist Winslow Homer was Flagg Homer’s nephew and often visited during the summers. Some of Winslow’s most famous paintings are set on Belmont Hill.

The Homer Family

Flagg Homer’s grandfather, Eleazer Homer, was a wharfinger; he ran Hobs Wharf from Lyn(n) Street, at the foot of State Street in Boston. Eleazer provided men and machines for loading and unloading cargo, and Boston merchants for buying and selling goods to ships docked at his Hobs Wharf. The family lived in Arlington.

Being a wharfinger was a rough-and-tumble business. It was competitive, yet lucrative and highly sought after. Eleazer operated Hobs Wharf for more than 40 years.

His son, also named Eleazer Homer, became a Boston merchant. He learned from his father that the real money to be made was in the buying and selling of ship cargo that came to the wharves of Boston. He bought cargo from ships landing in Boston and sold it to other merchants or Boston

businesses. Due to his connections with wharfingers and, increasingly, Boston merchants, his business thrived.

The Homer family prospered. The next generation grew up and continued the business as merchants. William Flagg Homer, Eleazer’s second grandson, specialized in the crockery and wallpaper business, purchasing crockery and related sundries from ships. In 1850, he established the first white porcelain pottery manufacturing factory in New England.

William Flagg Homer’s crockery business flourished, as did his porcelain factory, and he built his fortune. He married Adaline Matilda Wellington on September 1, 1831, in Arlington.

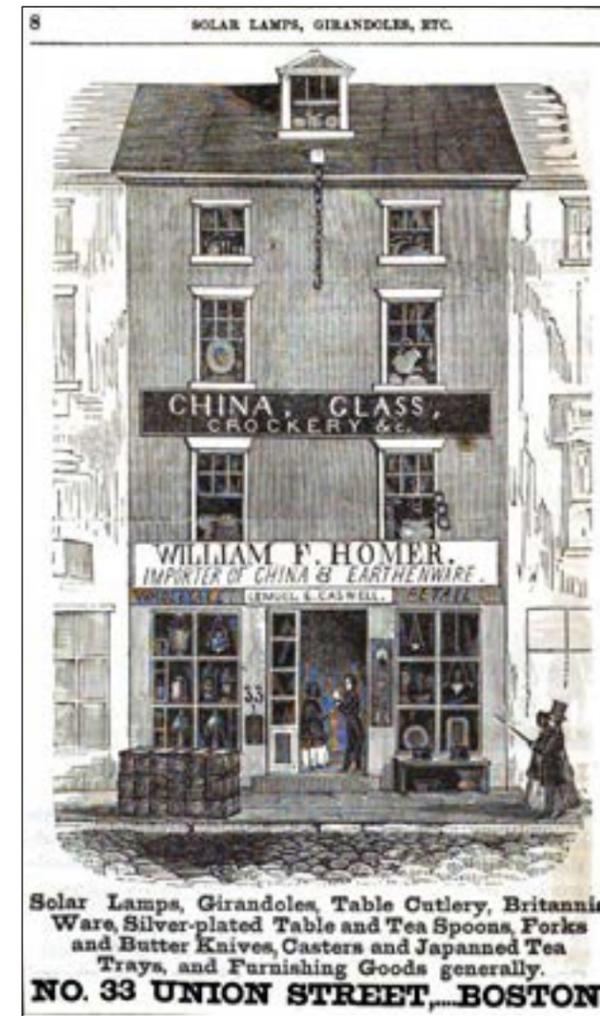
The Mead Family

Samuel Orlando Mead was a registered broker in Boston and practiced his trade for over 30 years, selling and buying stocks, properties, and buildings in the city. On June 27, 1822, Mead married Mary Maria Dix Wellington. He brokered a sale of land from the Underwood Estate to himself and, in 1836, built a Federal Style (Greek Revival) house on Wellington Hill, where the Homer House now stands, on Concord Avenue. By 1829, Mead owned the 14 acres that are now known as the Underwood Estate.

The Homer House

Property

William Flagg Homer purchased land for the Homer House from the Underwood Estate through his brother-in-law, Samuel Mead, in 1850, and built the house in 1853.



1848 advertisement for William Flagg Homer’s crockery business.

Who designed and built the Homer House?

Architects are usually proud of their work: creating a beautiful structure requires talent, education, and expertise in science, engineering, and the arts. If they are fortunate enough to secure a commission and complete the project, they take pride in and value their effort.

In the Homer House case, no one knows who the architect was, and no one has claimed to have contributed to the architectural or building effort. For 150 years, the mystery has endured.

Architecture, Design, Builder, and Building

In 1850, there were no college programs in architecture in the United States and only a few architects in the Boston area. T. William Robert Ware (1832–1915) designed and led the first college program in architectural education in the country. He was appointed to the newly founded Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1865 and taught the first architecture classes there.

Builders built homes in Belmont in 1850. The Homer house was built in 1853. Architects did not design homes in Belmont until the 1880s and 1890s, according to the book *Belmont: The Town of Homes*. Before that, owners and designers used “The Practical House Carpenter” and other books, and manuals to design homes, and builders and craftsmen to build homes.



Spiral staircase at the Homer House.

In the case of the Homer House, Simon Hatch, who built the Blake house next door and had a workshop in the carriage house nearby, was reputed to be a very sophisticated builder and carpenter of some renown, working on buildings in the greater Boston area. Homer, Mead, and Hatch most likely sat down at Homer’s kitchen table and went through the design books. They designed the house, room by room, then discussed the embellishments of each room and what should be done. They also talked about the craftsmen needed and what Homer was willing to pay.

Who was the architect of the Homer House?

William Flagg Homer, Samuel O. Mead, and their builder probably designed the Homer House. Their unconventional process did not drive their fame or fortune. No architect could claim, publish, or advertise the Homer House as theirs, so its history, fame, and fortune went muted and unrecorded.

That does not make it less than the magnificent house that it is. Just look at the majestic, spiral staircase. Go examine the oval dining room. The walls, wooden door, and frames are curved. Four doors each in a different place along the oval. Then look at the entertaining/living room with its grand fireplace and beamed ceiling with inset embellishments. Go to the top of the staircase and look at the light-providing octagonal cupola, with a widow’s walk, and it illuminates the entire center of the building with sunlight in a time without electricity!

The women of the Belmont Woman’s Club recognized it for what it was and is. They preserved it and upgraded its exterior and interior in the context of its original design and placement.

Read bonus material on Belmont’s history and notable residents at BelmontCitizensForum.org.

John Beaty is a Belmont resident and lives in the Pleasant Street Historic District. He is an alternate member of the Belmont Historic District Commission, and is retired from Northeastern University.

Book Review: *Here Comes the Sun* by Bill McKibben

By Jeffrey North with assistance from Roger Wrubel

In his latest book, *Here Comes the Sun*, environmental writer and activist Bill McKibben offers a compelling case for why solar energy may be the most hopeful—and practical—path forward in the fight against climate change. McKibben, who has long been a voice for climate action and grassroots mobilization, weaves together history, science, and policy to argue that solar power is not only technologically viable but also socially transformative.

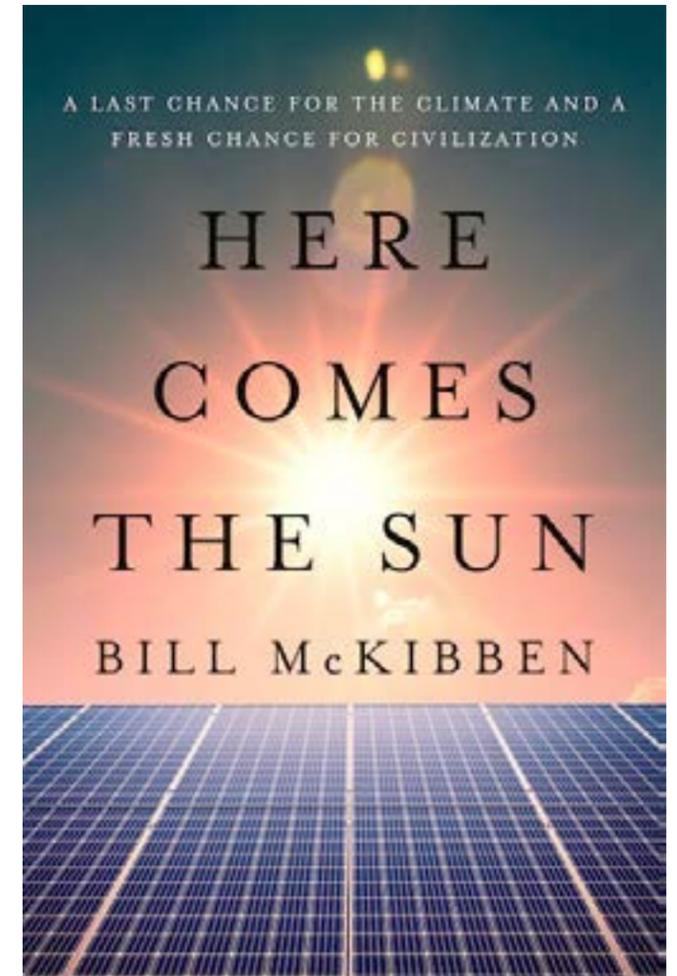
McKibben begins by tracing the origins of the modern solar movement, reminding readers that the technology is hardly new. What has changed, he notes, is cost and scale. Once prohibitively expensive, solar panels are now cheaper than coal or natural gas in much of the world. He documents how communities from rural India to suburban America are embracing distributed solar, installing panels on rooftops, farms, schools, and community centers.

The heart of the book, however, lies in McKibben’s argument that solar is not just an energy source: it is a democratizing force. Unlike fossil fuels, which require centralized extraction, infrastructure, and political power, solar lends itself to local control. Neighborhoods, towns, and even households can become energy producers, reducing dependence on large utilities and foreign oil. In this sense, solar promises not only environmental benefits but also political and economic ones, empowering citizens and communities.

McKibben does not shy away from solar’s challenges. He acknowledges the intermittency of solar power, the need for advances in storage technology, and the political resistance from entrenched fossil fuel interests. He is also candid about the scale of transformation required: a rapid buildout of renewable infrastructure, coupled with decisive public policy and international cooperation.

Yet McKibben’s tone is more optimistic than in his earlier works, such as *The End of Nature*. He argues that for the first time in modern history, the tools to avert climate catastrophe are within reach—and that solar stands at the center of that opportunity.

For readers in Belmont and across Massachusetts, *Here Comes the Sun* is timely. Our state and our



town are investing in the hope, efficiency, and cleaner power described so optimistically by McKibben.

The state has just opened the third generation of its SMART program: SMART 3.0, which has incentives for rooftop and community solar as well as battery storage. SMART stands for Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target. Working toward grid modernization, the state required Eversource, National Grid, and Unitil to create Electric Sector Modernization Plans, which are five-year roadmaps to upgrade their electric grids for reliability, resilience, and decarbonization. These were filed with the Department of Public Utilities in 2024.

In Belmont, the town demonstrated municipal leadership by completing a solar array on the Cheney Middle School gym roof at the end of 2021, the first municipal building in Belmont to go solar. Recent town-sponsored or town-facilitated steps toward expanding solar energy include funding and support for installing solar panels

on the new Belmont Sports Complex, home of the Skip Viglirolo Skating Rink, with a \$250,000 commitment from Belmont Light, and donations from future anchor tenants, Belmont Hill School, and Belmont Day School.

The town achieved its goal of 100% non-carbon-emitting electric supply in 2022 via a mix of renewable sources plus Renewable Energy Credits, according to Belmont Light, while keeping our rates stable and our service safe and reliable. Belmont Light's energy goals align with those set forth in the town's Climate Action Plan and the Belmont Roadmap for Strategic Decarbonization.

For residential and commercial solar projects, Belmont has enacted streamlined permitting for solar and EV installations under Massachusetts SB 379, enabling instantaneous plan review through a Symbium portal. The town has adopted a solar energy bylaw (Section 4.3.8) in its zoning regula-

tions to encourage siting accessory and ground-mounted solar systems, along with design and setback standards.

Belmont residents who have already installed solar panels on their homes will find in McKibben's book both validation and a broader context for their efforts. Those who have not may come away convinced that joining the solar movement is both a civic and environmental responsibility.

In the end, McKibben's book is less about technology than about hope. *Here Comes the Sun* invites us to imagine a future in which energy is clean, affordable, and local—and to take part in building that future now.

Jeffrey North is the managing editor of the Belmont Citizens Forum Newsletter. Roger Wrubel is a member of the Belmont Energy Committee.

Town Meeting OK's Community Path Right of Way

By Vincent Stanton, Jr.

On October 22, Town Meeting voted overwhelmingly to approve two warrant articles that clear the way for the town to assemble the right of way (ROW) for the community path.

Article 5 authorizes the Select Board to acquire the land necessary for the community path. That land totals 265,805 square feet, and most of it is owned by public or nonprofit entities: 45.2% by the MBTA, 40.3% by the Belmont Citizens Forum, and 8.9% by the Town of Belmont. The Belmont Citizens Forum has communicated to the town its intent to donate the 107,172 square foot parcel it owns. An additional 4.8% of the parcel is owned by commercial entities, and 0.8% is owned by residents.

Article 5 also authorizes the town to acquire the temporary easements necessary for construction of the path. They total 59,968 square feet.

The second measure, Article 6, allows use of Belmont Middle and High School land for the north-south path spur. This segment of the path will connect Channing Road to Alexander Avenue via a tunnel under the Fitchburg Line tracks and connections to the middle-high school campus. It will also coincide with the location of an existing sidewalk that hugs the eastern side of Harris Field and extends to Concord Avenue.

When Town Meeting member Stephen Rosales asked how much it would cost to acquire this ROW and how it would be financed, Community Path Project Committee chair Holly Muson explained that the land parcels had not yet been independently appraised, which will happen in a later stage of the highly structured Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) ROW acquisition process, so a precise answer is impossible.

However, she noted that in spring 2024, Glenn Clancy, the late town engineer, had estimated a budget of \$630,000. That figure was based on his experience with the MassDOT ROW acquisition process during the Trapelo Road improvement project, and more recently the Wellington School Safe Routes to School pedestrian improvements.

Muson also pointed out that Clancy and the Community Path Project Committee obtained a \$475,000 Mass Trails grant from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation in 2024 and, as a condition of receiving that grant, a \$160,000 appropriation of Community Preservation Act funds from Town Meeting, totaling \$635,000.

Vincent Stanton, Jr. is a director of the Belmont Citizens Forum.

Letter To the Editor

To the Editor:

Love the publication of this article [*"Where Does the Water Go?"*, BCF Newsletter, September/October 2025], but there is an important correction to make:

"It briefly enters Clay Pit Pond, then exits via a culvert beneath Concord Avenue, flowing into Wellington Brook." should read:

"It briefly enters Clay Pit Pond, then exits via a culvert beneath Brighton Street, flowing into Wellington Brook."

Basically Wellington Brook flows from the library to a culvert under Concord Avenue, and then into Clay Pit Pond. Water flows out of Clay Pit Pond into a culvert under Brighton Street into another part of Wellington Brook, which then flows in and out of Blair Pond. So the article misidentifies the entrance as the exit, getting the direction of flow wrong. The next sentence has the direction and water bodies correct. It's confusing that Wellington Brook was engineered to flow into and out of both Clay Pit Pond and Blair Pond, so has multiple short segments, some of which are culverted.

Anne-Marie Lambert

ANN COIT SIFNEOS

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