

Friends of Spy Pond Park Newsletter

Winter 2007-2008

President's Letter

Dear Friends,

There are so many details involved in maintaining Spy Pond Park. This Fall the Park and Recreation Department employed Kate Thompson from Carol R. Johnson Associates landscaping firm to train Friends of Spy Pond Park (FSPP) members to help keep Spy Pond Park beautiful. During the Summer and Fall, volunteers spent many hours pruning bushes and pulling invasive plants and trees. Bill Eykamp and Eric Baatz intend to continue these efforts unless there is inclement weather. Contact Bill at 781-646-3320 to find out when you can join them. The DPW used a rototiller to turn the soil and uproot the weeds around the front of the playground fence. They planted grass there to enhance the area's appearance. A contractor, Prescription Turf Systems, has been caring for special treatment of the grass in the Park to ensure its healthy growth. We hope we can find a way to have this continue. The FSPP has been and, hopefully, always will be a strong support and advocate for the Park.

We will have a display in the foyer of the Robbins Library during March this year. Take a trip to the library to see the photos of the Park. You can also sign up there to volunteer for clean-ups and weeding, mulching, and pruning days that start in the Spring. The library display is also a great way to let others know about our wonderful Park and to solicit new membership.

We are looking forward to a great year this year. We invite more of you to attend our meetings. The next one will be held on February 3 at 3 PM at 32 Hamilton Road #402, Arlington, MA. (You'll get to see the beautiful view of Spy Pond from my condominium!) With your interest, enthusiasm, and support we can pursue our goals more easily this year. Come to add your comments and assistance as we implement our plans throughout 2008. Finally, I ask you to please send us your email address so we can keep you informed and current on FSPP activities, projects, and concerns. As always, I greatly appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

Karen L. Grossman
President
Friends of Spy Pond Park



Boy Scout Troop #302.

Pruning Out Invasives

By Bill Eykamp

When Spy Pond Park was renovated, some wonderful plantings were included. Especially important and prominent are those bordering Spy Pond.

The landscapers took up our charge to make these borders both beautiful and functional. We hoped to reduce foot traffic and thus erosion by focusing access to a small number of well-maintained paths. In addition, there is the boat ramp required by the needs of the Town and the boating public. Between these points is a border of carefully selected plants with the added goal of discouraging Canada geese.

That was the plan. In nature, plans are often (always?) thwarted by plants we didn't intend to grow wherever they can find a bit of light and soil.

When the Friends toured the relatively new plantings with the landscape architect, we were all struck with the vigor of these uninvited guests. We were particularly struck with the size of poplar trees and false indigo (*Amorpha fruticosa*) bushes. In the span of two years these plants had dominated much of the plantings selected for the site. While these plants are neither exotic nor devoid of merit, they were effectively crowding out the more desirable and much more expensive stock we had planted. The needed pruning was unmatched by funds for maintenance. Enter the volunteer pruning squad.

(Continued on page 2)

(Pruning, continued)

When we first deployed—short on numbers but long on enthusiasm—we were ill-equipped for our daunting task. Our equipment consisted mostly of pruning tools suitable for cutting pencil-size branches. After some well meaning but ineffectual snipping, we realized that we needed a chain saw—or two or three. So, doing what we could with the bigger stuff, we concentrated on brush including some pretty tough multi-flora roses whose thorns are formidable. Nonetheless, in a few good hours of work, we piled up a very impressive collection of biomass that the Town promptly hauled away (a bit too soon, I thought, because I wanted everyone to be impressed by our accomplishment).

Enter Boy Scout Troop 302, of the Minuteman Council and Trinity Baptist Church. Did they ever answer the call!

I could scarcely believe our good fortune when they volunteered to help, and everyone was delighted when they showed up in force in wonderful weather. They did bring a chain saw. They brought various saws and a few axes. They brought siblings and friends. We had quite a crew, the core of which was age 11-18, accompanied by working adults who knew how to make the equipment and the boys effective.

Everyone pitched in with a will. We quickly filled all available space with felled trees and brush; quite impressive! I was particularly tickled by the axe-wielders. Remembering my own youthful exploits, I was well aware that “axemanship” takes lots of practice and is not nearly as easy as it looks. So, we tried to find appropriate places where the novices could become a little more proficient without undue risk to ego, limb and spectators. The chips did fly in a most satisfying way, although the felling efficiency fell somewhat short of “proficient.” I loved it and they improved dramatically.

We didn't finish, and I'd love to have them back. Meanwhile, anyone who has the yen for a little practice in pioneering is most welcome to help in our continuing effort to liberate our landscape from the invaders. Contact me at 781-646-3320.

You Can Be a Beautification Coordinator!

by Ellen Robertson, past Beautification Coordinator

Beauty *is* in the eyes of the beholders; you, and the hundreds who have seen the renovated Spy Pond Park, have voted with your feet—we *all* see the new park and adjacent pond as truly beautiful. Now, we need hands to keep it so.

The past year and a half volunteers planted bulbs, weeded, and pruned; necessary tasks which the Town's maintenance budget does not cover. This coming season we have leaders for pruning and mulching teams. We *need* leaders for weeding and the clean-ups plus a coordinator for all beautification activities.

Coordinator requirements are:

1. Love for the Park, and
2. The enthusiasm to gather people together a few times in the Spring and early Fall.

We have the tools and lists of volunteers.

We need you to coordinate these vital efforts so the Park will remain beautiful. Please contact Karen Grossman, President of the Friends of Spy Pond Park, a.s.a.p. Please call 781-646-5990 or send an email to klgwoman@comcast.net. You can make an amazing impact in Spy Pond Park!

You Can Be Co-President or Vice-President of the Friends of Spy Pond Park!

by Ellen Robertson

This is the fourth year that Karen Grossman has assumed the position of President of Spy Pond Park. Now it is time for someone else to step up and learn the ropes of this terrific organization, the Friends of Spy Pond Park.

We are looking for someone who will learn how to chair meetings, monitor the progress of the various committees, and help pursue the year's goals of the FSPP.

It's not a difficult job because the committees have the ability to pursue their goals on their own. You would just be responsible for overseeing their progress. This is both rewarding and exciting as you facilitate making the dreams of the FSPP come true!

We need you to become the Co-President or Vice-President of the FSPP this year assisting Karen Grossman in preparation for your becoming President next year. You can even be new to our group and get involved in this big way. See the contact information above to volunteer to be trained to do this worthwhile and rewarding job.

Save a Tree: Get Your Newsletter by Email

by Fred Moses, Webmaster

Would you like to help the FSPP go green by receiving our newsletters online exclusively? Would you like to help us get information to you concerning meetings, projects, concerns, and call for action in a timely manner? Would you like to save us money? Follow these easy instructions to give us your email address a.s.a.p.:

1. Go to our website, www.friendsofspypondpark.org,
2. Go to the membership page,
3. Click on login,
4. Enter FSPP as the name and thepark (no space) as the password,
5. Fill out the simple form that is presented to give us your email address and indicate your preference regarding receiving the newsletter by email, and
6. Submit your completed entry.

You can help the environment and enable us to reach out to you more efficiently and effectively.

FSPF Annual Meeting Discussion

January 6, 2008

In attendance: Eric Baatz, John Bean, Eric Berger, Frances Cameron, Jamie Ciocco, Sarah Conn, Anne Ellinger, Bill Eykamp, Karen Grossman, Elizabeth Karpati, Betsy Leondar-Wright, Gail Leondar-Wright, Gail McCormick, Fred Moses, Gail Neff, Tomi Ann Nolan, Agnes O'Donnell, Riva Poor, DP Powell, Eileen Power, Ellen Robertson, John Worden, Patricia Worden.

FSPF Accomplishments 2007

(not in order of importance):

- Bulletin board installed at south end of playground by Andrew Fischer, Bill Eykamp, and Eric Baatz (shingling needs completion, not repair as stated in previous minutes).
- Plastic coyote to scare off geese bought by Ellen and Betsy with funds donated in memory of Marilyn Hepner, FSPF Treasurer, installed along shoreline and moved periodically by four volunteers. There seemed to be fewer geese this year than in the past.
- Weeding, organized by Sarah: About four working sessions with several volunteers each time; removed a lot of invasives and weeds but did not get to all areas. More work to be done in spring.
- Pruning, organized by Bill: Several sessions removed or pruned back excess saplings. Karen and Adrienne Landry got the Boy Scouts from Troop 302 to help; they are willing to do it again this year.
- Educational workshops: Kate Thompson of CRJA and Carol R. Johnson herself met with the weeders to show them what to pull and what to leave. Kate provided large charts of the planting plan. Elizabeth used these to make smaller charts for use in the field; these still need to be completed to show what's really there (some plants turned up in different beds from what is shown on the plan).
- Website: Fred put a lot of work into this. The membership database is now on the Web. It can be updated by those who have the password. It can be used to send e-mails to all members and to produce mailing labels and lists by interest. Fred wants to add enhancements so that members can pay dues and update their information on-line.
- Outreach: Ellen made many phone calls to remind members about meetings, needs help making calls.
- Database updating to correct obsolete phone numbers etc. and add missing information like e-mail addresses made limited progress.
- Park activities, organized by Anne: three events on the last Saturday of June, July, August with activities mainly for kids such as face painting and a scavenger hunt. The first one was well attended, but the second one had to be moved to Sunday because of rain and the third was on a very hot, muggy day, so that fewer people came to those. Still, probably about 100 people were made aware of FSPF and a few joined.
- Spy Pond Splash in September was part of Arlington's 200th anniversary celebration, organized by Vision 2020 with the cooperation of FSPF (Anne). We had a booth there. The Splash was a big success, with hundreds enjoying themselves in perfect weather. The canoe rides were so popular that canoe rentals on several occasions next summer will probably be arranged by the Town.
- T-shirt sales yielded \$299. Eric now has the supply of T-shirts.
- The Town Day booth (Kathy Modigliani) was successful again, with the usual activities: T-shirt sales, Betsy's puzzles for kids, and signing up new members.
- Friends of Parks is an initiative of Joe Connelly, Park & Rec Director, bringing together people from various "Friends of..." groups to plan for fund-raising for parks, playing fields, and other open spaces. Karen and Elizabeth represented FSPF.
- Newsletter: John Gearin put out three issues but he has resigned. Thank you, John, for your many dedicated years of service!
- Publicity for the park activities (information to the Arlington Advocate) was handled by Agnes.
- There was no library display this year: each group can do a display only every other year.
- Liaison with Vision 2020 is handled by Elizabeth.
- The listing of accomplishments ended with applause for Karen for her leadership.

Goals for 2008

(also not in order of importance)

- Complete the bulletin board in the playground
- Move Marilyn, the coyote, weekly
- Weed and mulch in spring (mulch before weeds grow, or weed and then mulch)
- Prune
- Maintain the path
- Website: enable on-line dues payment and donations
- Enhance database content
- Newsletter available on website – make paper copies optional (ask on membership form)
- Have a spring and summer presence in the park, coordinated with canoe rental days
- Library display
- Town Day booth
- More T-shirt sales
- Liaison with Friends of Parks for fund-raising
- Get park maintenance funded: liaison with Town, apply for grants for 2009
- Make a list of where our materials and equipment are kept
- Newsletter – publish 3 or 4 issues
- Get more people involved in leadership and committees

Election of Officers at FSPP Annual Meeting January 6, 2008

- President: Karen Grossman (looking for a co-president)
- General Vice-President: open
- Treasurer: Eric Baatz
- Recording Secretary: Elizabeth Karpati

- VP for Communications (Newsletter): Eric Berger to collect content, Jamie Ciocco to edit
- Publicity and Outreach Chair: Eric Berger
- Beautification Chair: open; Anne willing to chair an activity but not to be overall chair. Agnes will arrange and coordinate mulching with the DPW.

John Bean, Arlington's DPW Director

John Bean, Arlington's Director of Public Works since July 2007, was the featured speaker at the FSPP annual meeting on January 6, 2008. Mr. Bean traces his family roots in the Boston area to 1653. He has lived in western Massachusetts and served as the Public Works Director for Northampton for 17 years. He spoke briefly about his four guiding principles and answered questions.

The four principles are:

1. Customer service (within the limits of available resources),
2. Cost effectiveness,
3. Fairness (no political favors), and
4. Safety.

He is currently studying all divisions of his department for cost effectiveness. He will study work orders regarding roads, parks, ball fields, etc...and the staff needed. Then using his experience elsewhere, he'll analyze how he's staffed for what the department needs to do.

Maintaining the necessary infrastructure of the Town, such as water and sewers and keeping the roads open, is a top priority, but sustainability is an important consideration.

Funding for park maintenance is an ongoing issue. Some money was left over from the capital budget for the renovations and transferred to the operating budget, but that has been used up for lawn maintenance. Volunteers did weeding and pruning, but they can't be relied upon for everything.

FSPP members emphasized that it is not cost-effective to spend money on renovations and then let them deteriorate. Mr. Bean invited representatives from FSPP to meet with him to discuss this issue further. We have set up a meeting for January 31st.

Green Dogs in Arlington?

by Elizabeth Karpati

What's a green dog??? No, it's not a denizen of the Emerald City of Oz. "Green" is a trendy word these days, so it got attached to a proposal to mitigate the conflict between Arlington's leash law and dogs' desire to run free and their owners' desire to let them.

The proposal calls for establishing limited hours at various parks and open areas around town when dogs would be allowed to run off leash, subject to specified rules. It is based on a program in Brookline which seems to be working well. A few small fenced-in dog runs are also under consideration.

This is not an attempt to roll back the leash law, which is being broken regularly anyway by owners who can't bear to keep their dogs cooped up or restrained all the time. Providing some legal opportunities for letting dogs run free would encourage owners to be more conscientious about observing the leash law at other times and places.

The proposal is available on the Town's website. A public meeting was held in October to present the program in general, followed by a series of neighborhood meetings to get public input, including comments on such details as proposed off-leash hours for each location. The December meeting for Thorndike Field and Waldo Park fell victim to a snowstorm, so the January 3 meeting scheduled for Spy Pond Park became a meeting for all proposed East Arlington locations.

Leslie Mayer, Chair of the Park and Recreation Commission (PRC), reviewed the proposal. An earlier plan to include a fenced dog run in McClennen Park raised objections from neighbors who feared having the area overrun by all the dogs in Arlington. The new proposal therefore calls for three small fenced areas spread around town, at McClennen Park, Poets' Corner, and Thorndike Field, and about a dozen areas with specified off-leash hours, usually dawn to 9 a.m., with dawn to dusk hours during the colder months in areas less likely to be used by people then.

License fees would be raised somewhat to pay for the cost of the program, including the fencing and bulletin boards at each site for posting the hours and rules (pick up after your dog, off-leash dogs must be under voice control and stay in the specified area, etc.) Only licensed dogs would be entitled to use the fenced runs and off-leash areas.

Comments made at the January 3 meeting included the following:

Peer pressure should be effective in making the program work – responsible owners who want to exercise their dogs off-leash legally will go after violators whose conduct threatens to get the privilege cancelled.

Some fenced dog runs are desirable for dogs whose owners find it hard to control them off-leash.

Both fenced and unfenced areas may create a "destination effect," bringing in more dogs than use the area now. Parking is likely to be a problem with increased use in any area.

Park-specific concerns were also raised. Waldo Park abutters worry that the park is too small for an off-leash area. For Spy Pond Park, Ellen Robertson spoke feelingly about a problem encountered by the weeding volunteers: Dogs find it easy to get behind the fences protecting the shoreline plantings, but their owners don't, so some doggy deposits have been left to be picked up by the weeder's shoes. Off-leash dogs would also cross the path of children who come to the fenced playground early and then leave it to run down to the shore. She requested that the off-leash areas at the Pond be limited to the two playing fields.

Leslie promised that the PRC would carefully consider the comments from all the meetings (one more was scheduled after January 3) in revising the plan, and that the proposal was for a one-year pilot program which would then have to go before Town Meeting again, for a vote to make it permanent (with any modifications deemed desirable) or to end it.

The plan is to present a warrant article to Town Meeting 2008 for a one-year pilot program in 2008-2009. This would allow for review and fine-tuning before considering whether to vote to make the program permanent.

Memories and Donations by Peggy Fenner

By Karen L. Grossman

Margaret (Peggy) L. Fenner who lives at the Spy Pond Condominiums has created a clever, family oriented CD, entitled "Spy Pond Stories and Poems" to help raise money for our beautifully renovated Spy Pond Park's maintenance. Her memories of living on the Pond have been woven into a sensitive, whimsical and historical collection of stories and poems. Listening to the CD will make you, your family and friends laugh, relax and easily visualize your own special memories of the Pond and the Park.

You may purchase the CD at Spy Pond Park related functions or order it now for \$12 (includes postage). Call Peggy at 781-646-5486 or email her at mlpfenner@gmail.com to place your order. The Park will benefit from each sale.

We wish to acknowledge another example of Peggy's generosity. Her mother (Margaret W. Fenner) passed away in 2006 and An Environmental Beautification Fund was created in her name. In the Fall Peggy thoughtfully earmarked a contribution of \$300 from this fund for the Friends of Spy Pond Park's use. We are extremely grateful for this wonderful gift that we also intend to use towards preserving the beauty of Spy Pond Park. Thank you so much, Peggy.

**Friends of Spy Pond Park
next meeting
at
Karen Grossman's
Sunday, February 3, 2008
3:00 p.m.
32 Hamilton Road #402**

RSVP to 781-646-5990
email klgwoman@comcast.net

Park on Linwood Street off Mass. Ave. or on Lakehill off
Lake St. at the far end of the complex.

To join Friends of Spy Pond Park...

Send your annual dues of (\$15 individual, \$25 household,
\$5 low-income) to

FSPP, P.O. Box 1051
Arlington, MA 02474-0021

For more information, call a Friends officer.

President: Karen Grossman (781) 646-5900
General Vice-President: Open
Treasurer: Eric Baatz (781) 641-7479
Recording Secretary:
Elizabeth Karpati (781) 643-4172
Chair for Publicity and Outreach:
Eric Berger (781) 859-5096
Co-Chairs for Beautification: Open
VPs for Communications(Newsletter):
Eric Berger (781) 859-5096
Jamie Ciocco (781) 316-1662
Website Chair: Fred Moses
Chair for Park Activities: Open

Friends of Spy Pond Park
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