

Belmont Citizens Forum

Vol. 2, No. 5

A Newsletter for Belmont Residents

September 2001

Waltham Shuttle Now Serves Waverley Square

By Sharon Vanderslice

Belmont residents can now get to the far end of Waltham and back without a car, thanks to the Waltham Citibus, which began service to Waverley Square on August 20. This 28-passenger shuttlebus carries riders out Trapelo Road as far as Lexington Street in Waltham, then takes Lexington Street toward Waltham Center. There, passengers can transfer to Citibuses that go to Deaconess Hospital, Brandeis University, Home Depot, and many corporate office parks. They can also transfer, at the Lexington line, to a Lexington shuttlebus that goes to the Burlington Mall.

The one-way fare is \$1, but can be as little as 50 cents if a rider purchases a 100-ride book. Unlimited monthly and annual passes are also available. Transfers to the Lexington Lexpress and Newton Nexus buses cost 25 cents.

Buses depart hourly from Waverley Square between 7:20 a.m. and 8:20 p.m. and are designed to carry bikes on a rack mounted on the front bumper.

Riders can get on at scheduled stops or can flag down the bus at any point along its route.

Funded primarily by the city of Waltham, the buses are operated by the non-profit Route 128 Business Council, which has been arranging alternative transportation for area employers since 1989.

A Boon to Students and Commuters

Waltham's intra-city service was started last year to augment existing MBTA bus lines and help

reduce congestion on city streets. Five different routes are now in place.

High school students use the buses to get to after-school jobs and other activities; elderly residents use them to get to shopping centers and medical appointments; and commuters use them to get directly to work or to the T. At Waverley Square, Waltham riders can connect to the #73 MBTA bus, which leaves for Harvard Square every seven minutes, or to the Commuter Rail, which runs most frequently during morning and evening rush hours.

Operating Expenses Paid by Developers

The Waltham Citibus is funding its service with fees paid by developers into the city's Transportation Mitigation Fund. It has also taken advantage of federal grant money and it collects

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Environmental Events

Come to the first meeting of the

Friends of the Belmont Citizens Forum

Speaker: Roger Wrubel
**“The Western Greenway--
1000 Acres of Open Space
in Our Backyard”**

Monday, September 24
7:30 p.m.
Bramhall Room
All Saints Church

Cold drinks and cookies will be served.

Explore Jericho Hill. The Waltham Land Trust leads a walk to one of the highest points in Waltham. Two Sundays, September 23 and 30, 3 to 4 p.m. Striking views from one of the city’s last open spaces. Meet in the Stigmatine Fathers’ parking lot, off Lexington Street. Call (617) 924-2033 or (781)894-2320.

Tour of Spy Pond Park. View some of Spy Pond’s problems with the Friends of Spy Pond. Arlington Selectman Charlie Lyons will be on this tour. Meet at Linwood Circle. Monday, September 24, 6 p.m.

Alewife Options Meeting. A public forum at Belmont Town Hall to discuss funding options for the purchase of the Belmont Uplands as open space as well as commercial development options for the property. Tuesday, September 25, 7 p.m.

Belmont Citizens Forum Traffic & Transportation Committee. Wednesday, October 3, 7:30 p.m. Call (617) 484-1844 for more details.

Autumnal Astronomy. Slide show and naked-eye viewing of star clusters, glowing gas clouds, and distant galaxies at Habitat. Call (617) 489-5050 to register. Age 10 and up welcome with an adult. Friday, October 12, 7-9:30 p.m. Raindate: Oct. 13.

The Nature of Massachusetts. Take a slide show trip with speaker Chris Leahy through protected habitats around the state, including Stellwagen Bank and Mt. Greylock. To register, call Habitat at (617) 489-5050. Wednesday, October 17, 7-8:30 p.m.

Western Greenway Walk. A three-hour, three mile trek through Habitat, McLean Hospital, Rock Meadow, Metropolitan State Hospital, and Olympus Hospital. Saturday, October 27, 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Call (617) 489-5050 to register.

Local Climate Protection Conference. Speakers and workshops on topics such as the science of climate change and municipal-level greenhouse gas reduction strategies. Sunday, October 28, at Tufts University. Sponsored by Massachusetts Climate Action Network. For information, check www.massclimateaction.org

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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 on key subjects.

Our newsletter is published six times a year (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.

Is It Time to Rebuild the Wellington School ?

By Lynne Polcari

The Roger Wellington School, with 456 students in kindergarten through fourth grade, is the largest of the town's four elementary schools. It is also the one most in need of repairs. A 1999 facilities audit commissioned by the Belmont School Committee to evaluate five of the town's schools concluded that the Wellington needed serious renovation or rebuilding.

In the spring of 2000, a Superintendent's Advisory Council on the Future Building Needs of the Wellington School was established to oversee a feasibility study and recommend a course of action. The architectural firm of Drummey Rosane Anderson, Inc. and its associated consultants were hired to assess the existing building and outline viable options.

The firm's final report was sobering. It concluded that all major systems in the building, including heating, plumbing and electrical, were at the end of their life expectancy. Engineer Richard Kimball

described parts of the HVAC (heating, ventilating, and air conditioning) system, in particular, as "living on borrowed time."

The complete failure of a major operating system could require the school department to accommodate students elsewhere while repairs are made. Since there is no excess capacity at any of the other Belmont schools, the cost to the town of such a move, said School Department Human Resources Manager Karen Pressey, could be substantial. Mobile classrooms, for example, cost \$50,000 apiece and the Wellington currently has 22 classes.

Current Building Design Causes Problems

Many of the physical problems at the school stem from its piecemeal design. Seven major buildings or additions dating back to 1892 have been located on or near this site. Four have since been demolished or destroyed by fire. The three sections that remain are a 1938 gym and cafeteria, formerly attached to the old high school; the 1963 Orchard Street wing, which houses 26 classrooms; and a small connecting unit between the two other sections, added in 1971 when the building was converted to an elementary school.

The result is an inefficient school building, originally designed for high school students, that must now accommodate children as young as five. Because of the inadequate HVAC system, some children and staff swelter while those across the hall freeze. The staff has complained continually of poor air quality, objectionable odors, and lack of ventilation.

There are other deficiencies. Kimball's report details problems with the age and condition of the cold water

Continued on next page



Wellington School, *continued from page 3*

domestic water service, the hot water storage tank, and parts of the simplex sump pump. The building's split-level construction is unsuitable for children with physical disabilities. There is no fire suppression system, and the location of the main office, in the center of the school, makes it impossible for the staff to see who is entering the building.

In addition, the windows on the south side, facing Orchard Street, need to be replaced. The feasibility study noted "structural problems in the unsupported partial height walls below the window. These walls do not meet code for either seismic loads or design wind loads. Similar problems affect the parapet wall along the edge of the roof."

Merely replacing these 1963 windows is not an option, because current building codes call for remediation of the structural flaws. This, in turn, would necessitate changes to meet the federal requirements for handicapped access. Classroom doorways would have to be widened, bathroom fixtures modified, and elevators installed.

Given the magnitude and variety of the problems, the Superintendent's Advisory Council recommended that the school be replaced rather than renovated. The old school would be demolished once the new one is completed.

Not Prudent to Wait

Doing nothing is not prudent, because piecemeal repairs will entail large and non-reimbursable costs. The cost of dealing with the major problems one at a time is estimated at \$8.5 million (in 2002 dollars). The effect of inflation on this amount and the expense associated with repeated disruptions in school operation must also be taken into account.

In general, piecemeal renovations are difficult to do because there are so many unknowns. For example, the Wellington School has numerous fixtures with asbestos insulation. Properly containing and removing hazardous materials while children are on site would be extremely expensive. Furthermore, all this work would have to be done without any financial assistance from the state.

The state reimbursement rate for new construction, however, is estimated to be 54 percent.

Three Construction Options Evaluated

The Advisory Council evaluated three ways to upgrade the physical plant: (1) full renovation of all major building systems in the current building, (2) renovation, partial demolition, and addition to the existing building, and (3) replacing the building with a new elementary school.

The estimated cost of a full renovation of all major building systems is \$17.8 million, with the cost to Belmont after state reimbursement falling to around \$10.3 million. It would involve relocating the children during construction, which is estimated to take 24 to 30 months. The negative features of this project are the unpredictability of estimating the cost and time required and the educational disruption to the children as they are shuttled around town. Furthermore, the building would still be unsuitable for small children and, because of its age, would be subject to high maintenance costs.

The second option (renovation, partial demolition, and addition to the existing building) carries a price tag of \$18.6 million if the building is occupied during construction and \$19.1 million if the building is vacant. Cost to the town is \$11.4 million and \$11.9 million respectively. While this option would retain the large gym, cafeteria, and music room originally designed for high school students, it is the most expensive to implement, particularly if the building were to be vacated during the process.

The third option is to build a new school on the west side, the present site of the playground and hardtop. This option would cost \$16.8 million, with a net cost of \$9.4 million to Belmont if the existing school is used while the new one is being constructed. In addition to being the least costly, this proposal would be the least disruptive to the students, have the most reliable cost and time estimate, and yield a building with the lowest future maintenance costs. It also would offer greater design flexibility.

As the town prioritizes its future building needs, it is not only the construction costs that should be considered, but also the hidden cost of delaying this project that should be carefully analyzed.

Lynne Polcari is a Town Meeting Member from Precinct 5 and the mother of two children who attend the Wellington School.

Noise By-Law Changes To Be Proposed

Belmont may become a noisier place if certain proposed changes to the town's by-law are approved. The Noise By-Law Committee, appointed last year by the selectmen to review Belmont's noise regulations, is about to propose that certain types of noise be permitted for longer periods of time than is currently allowed.

The most substantial change is a special allowance for reciprocating impact devices such as rock drills and jackhammers (also known as pavement breakers).

Under the existing law, the limit for continuous (one hour) operation of such a device is 65 dBA on any property other than that on which the device is operating (dBA is a measure of sound level as perceived by the human ear). For devices used only 15 minutes out of every hour, the limit is now 70 dBA.

The proposed by-law would raise that limit to 90dB(A) for any period longer than 10 minutes.

This is as loud as a jackhammer operating about 50 feet from your ear.

Significantly, the law would also include a provision that noise will not be measured less than 50 feet from its source, even on a neighboring property.

The Noise By-Law Committee was formed after years of complaints from abutters to the Mormon temple property on Belmont Hill, who maintained that the town's existing noise by-law was not adequately enforced during construction. Some committee members fear that residents will have similar complaints about the proposed construction on the McLean Hospital property, which will entail blasting and rock drilling.

The next meeting of the Noise By-Law Committee is scheduled for Monday, September 24, at 7:30 p.m. The location of the meeting has not yet been announced, but should be posted soon at Town Hall.
—Sharon Vanderslice

Updates

Trapelo Road Sidewalk. Belmont's Traffic Advisory Committee has approved plans for the redesigned intersection at Pleasant Street and Trapelo Road, with certain conditions and modifications. These include the construction of a new sidewalk, paid for by McLean Hospital, on the wooded side of Trapelo Road near Pleasant.

Kendall Insurance Settlement. Earlier this month, Belmont's Board of Selectmen announced that the town had reached a settlement with the Great American Insurance Company relative to the loss of the former Kendall School building, which was destroyed by fire in 1999. "The Town has settled the replacement cost claim at an amount of \$5,762,764," the selectmen's statement read. "In addition, the Company has paid costs related to demolition and debris removal, as well as reimbursement of some Town costs, in the amount of \$1,320,900." It also noted that "the compromise settlement involved a 'cash-out.' A

cash out is an upfront lump sum payment that does not mandate a replacement building or, if a building is to be constructed, the schedule or other aspects of construction (size, quality, etc.). The Board considers the cash out option to be valuable given the immediate cash flow it creates and the flexibility it will provide."

Corrections:

Alewife Parking. Our July issue reported that 5000 new parking spaces were proposed for the Alewife area. But there are at least 900 other spaces, currently on land belonging to the Metropolitan District Commission, slated for demolition. This means that the net gain would be slightly over 4000 spaces. These represent about 12,000 additional vehicle trips per day.

Track and Field. Belmont's new high school track and field is estimated to cost \$2.2 million, or an average of \$39 per year per homeowner, not \$41 as previously reported.

Why Does Belmont Need a New Library?

This week, Belmont's Board of Selectmen will be meeting to prioritize a list of building projects that the town faces over the next five years. This article was submitted by Terry McCarthy, President of the Friends of the Belmont Public Library.

Compared with towns of similar population, Belmont has one of the most heavily used libraries in the Commonwealth. Seventy percent of our residents have library cards.

Belmont residents, who tend to be well-educated, rank highly in other measurements of library usage too: circulation, number of reference questions, use of the meeting rooms, and participation in children's and young adult programs and activities.

Our popular main library is, unfortunately, overcrowded. And its 1965 design does not adequately meet today's needs. The planners, of course, could not have anticipated the media explosion: videos, CDs, talking books, e-books, computers, library networks, the Internet, and other technologies. The library lacks space not only for the books it already owns, but for the computer-training rooms, small quiet study rooms, and story-hour/craft rooms that are standard in modern public libraries.

In 1994, the library director, trustees, and staff undertook a study of the library's increasing circulation, lack of space for new programs and technologies, and age-related building deficiencies. Using the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners Library Building Program Workbook, the staff and trustees, with participation from community members and library users, determined the long-term space needs of the library.

In March 2000, the Trustees hired the architectural firm of Tappe Associates to conduct a feasibility study. The firm held meetings with the staff and many Town departments to assess available options.

Several town properties were reviewed as possible building sites, but none met the requirements. The final decision was that the library should remain on the present site, because it is centrally located, is near public transportation, and is in close proximity to several schools.



The feasibility study, which was completed in January 2001, presented three options:

1) Existing building renovation. All of the building's mechanical systems (now on their last legs) would be replaced. Retrofitting a new heating, ventilating, and air conditioning system, however, would be difficult because of the low floor-to-floor heights. Making the building fully accessible to the handicapped, as required by law, would reduce by 50 percent the space available for materials. The children's room, the reference room, the young adult room, and the adult reading area would all be smaller. This option does not address any of the library's overcrowding issues and inefficiencies and would not qualify for funding through the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program since it does not meet projected space requirements.

Approximate Project Cost: \$5.2 million.

2) Addition and renovation. Each of the options for additions to the existing building has drawbacks. Wellington Brook, which flows behind the library, limits expansion toward the rear. Zoning requirements limit expansion toward Concord



Initial design by Tappe Associates of proposed new library building.

Avenue. The building's low floor-to-floor height limits expansion over the parking lot by making it impossible for emergency vehicles to get access to the building on that side. The building's exterior walls are load-bearing and cannot be changed. A seismic joint would be required between the existing building and any addition. Because of the way it is constructed, the ground-level floor cannot be made to support additional weight. Any addition would be costly to build, would require additional staffing due to line-of-sight limitations, and would eliminate future expansion. Although this option qualifies for state funding, it is an expensive and inferior alternative. **Approximate Project Cost: \$10.4 million.**

3) New building. This option would provide adequate space for the collection, make better use of the library staff, and allow for future expansion. It also would be fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and would accommodate unified and efficient mechanical, electrical, technological, and fire suppression systems. An open and flexible design would enhance library services in many ways. It would provide sufficient space and wiring for computer workstations, more patron seat-

ing, an expanded area for families with small children, and expanded study areas for older children, teens, and adults. Staff work areas, particularly circulation, would be equipped and designed to make books and other materials more quickly available. The collection itself, which is currently fragmented, would be arranged so it is easily accessible. And, this option would qualify for state funding. According to current funding formulas, Belmont could receive between \$3 and \$3.5 million from the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program toward the projected cost. **Approximate Project Cost: \$12.4 million.**

A new library would provide a safer, more accessible building with adequate space for present and future needs. It would serve the entire community. Frankly, Belmont citizens deserve a much better facility. Almost every town inside Route 128 has upgraded its library. It is Belmont's turn. Please join the Friends of the Belmont Public Library in supporting the Trustees' recommendation for a new library building on the present site. Speak to your Town Meeting members and let them know that you support a new building.

Shuttle Service, Funded by Federal Grants and

Continued from page 1

some advertising revenue from companies that display posters inside the bus.

It costs approximately \$100,000 a year, or between \$47 and \$49 per hour, to operate one shuttlebus, said Caroline Connor, Executive Director of the Route 128 Business Council. Seed money for new routes is available in the form of CMAQ grants (federal-funded Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Grants). These grants are awarded to certain organizations that have done feasibility studies and clearly identified needs for alternative transportation.

CMAQ grants can cover 50 percent of the operating costs for the first year, with reduced funds available for the second and third year. The remaining funding must come from public or private sources.

Fares paid by passengers typically cover only 15 percent of the total operating cost of a bus. The rest of the funding for most Route 128 Business Council buses is supplied by developers and large employers. Each developer pays a basic subsidy of between \$1000 and \$20,000 per year for a scheduled bus stop at its building. Some businesses also subsidize individual fares, so that their employees can ride free or at reduced rates. (In these cases, the companies are billed up to \$2 each way for every

employee's fare.) Apartment complexes too can make this service available to residents by building the cost into their leases.

The city of Needham, in partnership with the 128 Business Council, recently launched a shuttlebus with support from 15 corporations. Now Needham requires all new developers to contribute to its program. Businesses pay 10 cents per square foot of office space, up to \$20,000 per company, to keep the bus on the road.

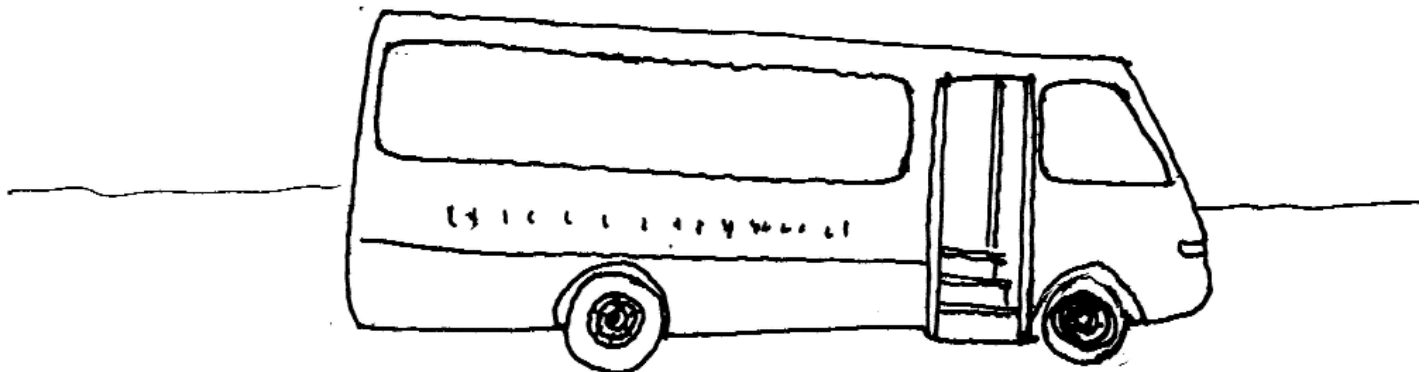
Any new development that is subject to review under the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act is now required to mitigate traffic congestion. Shuttlebus service is one way to do that.

Small, Clean, Quiet

The shuttles provided by the Route 128 Business Council are smaller, lighter, and quieter than full-size MBTA buses. In the future, they may be quieter still. Executive Director Caroline Connor said she is exploring the possibility of using buses that operate on natural gas rather than diesel fuel.

All buses are air conditioned and are washed and vacuumed at night.

The council does not own its buses; it leases them as needed. It also subcontracts for the services of the bus drivers. This means it does not have to



Private Fees, Helps Reduce Traffic Congestion

worry about auto insurance or liability issues.

In addition to bus service, the council provides a carpool matching service to help commuters with similar work hours share a ride. Some area businesses offer preferred parking spaces to carpools.

“We exist to educate people about transportation options,” Connor said.

Guaranteed Ride Home for Regulars

Some commuters are reluctant to commit to alternative transportation, because they fear they would be unable to get home in an emergency. The Route 128 Business Council responds to this concern by offering employees a free cab ride when they must get home to care for a sick child, tend to an illness of their own, or work late unexpectedly. People who carpool, vanpool, or ride a shuttlebus at least three days a week qualify for this service.

The council was formed in 1989 by three companies in Waltham that were concerned about gridlock on Route 128 between Route 2 and Route 9. With the support of then Governor Michael Dukakis, GTE Laboratories, Polaroid, and the Nelson Companies started the first shuttlebus to and from Alewife Station.

The council’s buses now carry over 100,000 passengers to and from Alewife, serving hundreds of companies. Buses are also provided for office workers in Needham and Wellesley who want to get to and from Green Line T stops in Newton Highlands and Riverside.

A Belmont Bus?

Could Belmont benefit from such a shuttlebus? The Belmont Traffic Advisory Committee is exploring the possibility. It plans to meet with Caroline Connor, director of the Route 128 Business Council, on October 9 at 7:30 in Room 1 of the Town Hall.

In previous years, the committee discussed some kind of shuttle service that would link the town’s three business districts: Waverley, Cushing, and Belmont Center. It has also expressed interest in links to McLean Hospital and the Alewife T. The MBTA has said that adding another MBTA bus

route in town would force it to eliminate an existing Belmont route. But a shuttlebus with some private funding is a whole different way to go.

For more information about the Waltham Citibus, call 781-890-0093 or check the following website: www.128bc.com/ For information about other Route 128 Business Council routes, call 781-890-0093, email BC128@tiac.net, or visit www.128bc.com

Sharon Vanderslice is a Town Meeting Member from Precinct 2.



Networking Potluck Picnic Sunday, September 23 1 p.m.

Please join us.

More than 20 regional groups dedicated to the preservation of environmental and historical resources have been invited to attend a networking picnic at Beaver Brook Reservation.

Use the parking lot off Waverley Oaks Road and follow the signs. Bring a platter of sandwiches or desserts to share.

Entertainment by the Spy Pond Players.

Raindate: September 30

Junction Brook, *continued from page 12*

ground piping system, which show that water from the spring that gave rise to Junction Brook now seems to be piped away from the brook, to the hospital's Power House. Dozens of pipes lead from the Power House in various directions. Some pipes are labeled "Abandoned?" or "Removed?" It is a spider's web, difficult to disentangle without more information.

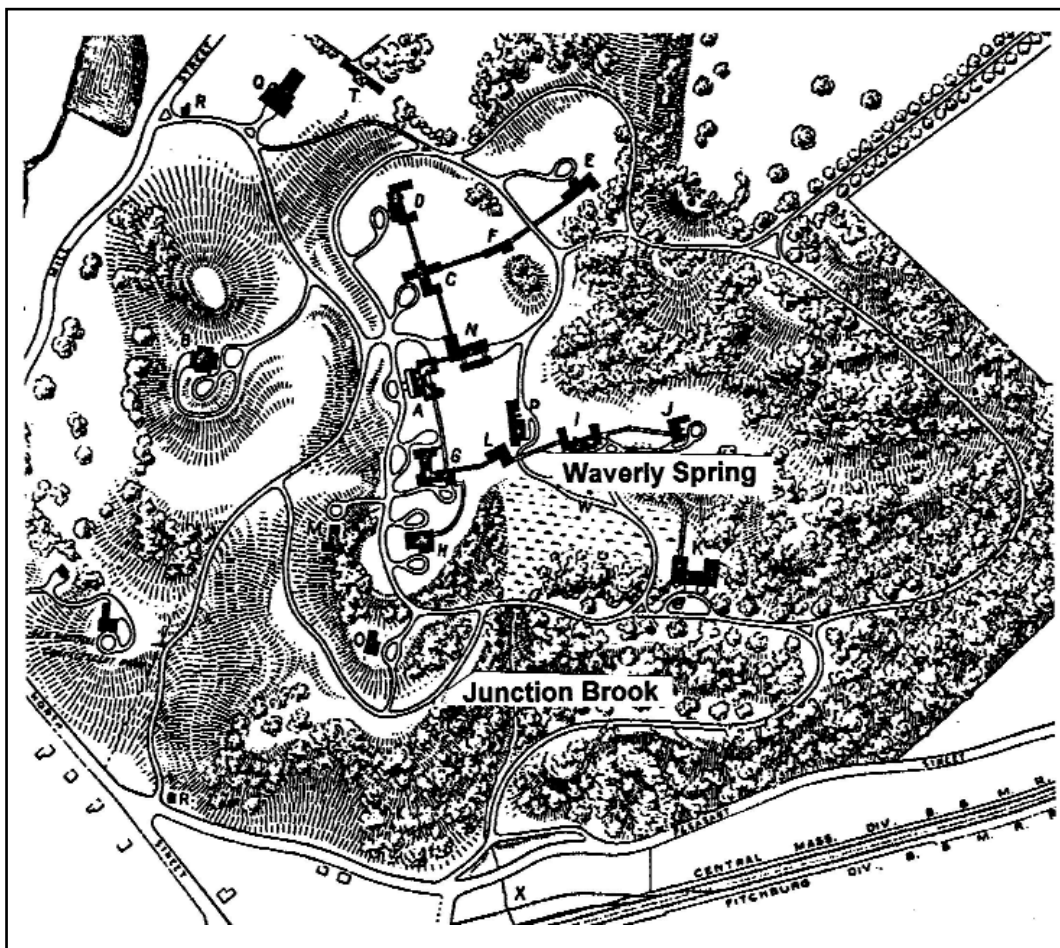
Pat Garner and the ConCom asked McLean to permit red dye tests to determine exactly what happens in all those pipes, but McLean refused. With limited information, the Conservation Commission ruled that the brook was intermittent. Twenty Belmont citizens, supported by the Citizens Forum, have appealed to the regional office of the state Department of Environmental Protection.

During the appeal, volunteers have been monitoring the brook daily. There was plenty of water in the early part of summer, but at the end of July the flow was slowing. I happened to be the monitor for the week of July 30 through August 5. Every day that week, I took my camera to Junction

Brook to see if it was flowing throughout its length, as the law requires. The key area is about 100 feet up from Pleasant Street, where the brook's course flattens out and a path crosses it. Since the rest of the course is steep, if the flow of water slows, that's where the brook will go dry. That's where it went dry on July 31, 1997 – and where it went dry again on July 31, 2001.

That morning, the flow of water was a pathetic trickle. But a few feet away, I heard water running underground, quite a lot of water, judging by the sound. A sewer line runs parallel to the brook, we learned. The next afternoon, Belmont resident Jeff Buster and I traced it up the slope through the woods. Some manholes were padlocked; but two had no locks, and we looked in those. The water looked clean. There were no solids at all, not even soap scum. It looked like fresh water.

We decided to try a dye test to trace the flow of water and asked three Belmont citizens to come along as witnesses. On Sunday morning, August 5, we drove up to the Higginson parking lot, where the R&D complex will be built. We selected one man-



On old maps of the McLean property, like this one from about 1910, Junction Brook stands out. The two intermittent streams that most people are familiar with don't even show up. Junction Brook arose from Waverly Spring, at the center of this map, which fed a large wetland, now covered with asphalt. It drains south in a deeply incised channel running down a steep slope to Pleasant Street.

We need you.

If you can volunteer even a few hours a month, you can make a difference. You do not need to be an expert—just a person who cares about our town.

I can devote time to:

- Archaeology & Historic Preservation
- Environmental Protection
- Planning & Zoning
- Traffic & Transportation
- Mailings
- Newsletter

I can help pay for this newsletter:

It costs about \$3500 to publish each issue of our newsletter. Please donate for this purpose:

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250

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

hole for the dye test and stationed our witnesses at others where the dye might be seen. We traced the dye to one manhole and possibly to a second. But clearly we had just begun the job.

We were on the McLean campus for about an hour. Security vans circled through the parking lot several times; at the end of an hour, two guards stopped to ask two of our witnesses who they were and what they were doing. At that point, Jeff walked up and offered his name, address, and phone number. We were asked to leave, and we did.

Three days later, I heard that there had been a sewage spill into Junction Brook. I grabbed my camera and walked over to see what was happening. A thick tongue of yellowish sludge spilled out of a manhole on the slope above Pleasant Street and into the brook. Andy Healy, McLean's director of facilities, and a crew of men were working at a manhole. Healy said there was apparently a clog in the sewer line; he did not want me to watch.

Security guards arrived and asked me to leave, even though I was standing in a wooded area that had been open to the public for decades. When I refused, they stood between me and the work crew to block my view. The Belmont police came and arrested me for trespassing. I was handcuffed, fingerprinted, and photographed and spent about three

hours in a Belmont jail cell. The trespass charge was dismissed in court the next morning. But that is not the end of the story.

Several days later, I learned that the sewer clog had been caused by an oil boom, a four-foot long cylindrical pad, put out six months before to clean up an oil spill. The booms had been left lying in the brook all spring and summer, so the oil they collected leached right back into the brook. And they had been tied inside drainage manholes. Perhaps one had broken loose. That boom could be evidence of a major connection between the drainage system and the sanitary sewer.

Since then, McLean has issued a barrage of publicity linking Jeff and me, with heavy innuendo, to the sewage spill – even though it admits that there is absolutely no evidence to suggest we were responsible for it. Using that innuendo, the hospital obtained a temporary restraining order and then a preliminary injunction to keep us off the property.

Jeff and I are now in Superior Court opposing an effort to ban us permanently from the McLean land. We are countersuing and also seeking documents related to the issue. If McLean is not dewatering Junction Brook, it should be willing to allow the state to make a full range of tests, including dye tests.

– Sue Bass

Belmont Citizens Forum
P. O. Box 609
Belmont, MA 02478

Address Service Requested

People Are Asking

What's all the fuss about Junction Brook?

Old-timers tell us that Junction Brook was once known as a major stream, one of five that drained Belmont Hill and Arlington Heights. For 800 to 900 feet, it runs down a steep slope on the McLean land across from the Star Market. At the bottom of the slope it enters a culvert under Pleasant Street, and later joins Wellington Brook.

The original source of the brook is now welled-in on the McLean campus near the Higginson House parking lot.

In 1997, a very dry year, McLean succeeded in getting Junction Brook declared an intermittent stream. Had it been declared perennial, the law would have restricted development for 200 feet on either side. Such a determination lasts only three years.

In March 2001, Martha Eakin, who lives

across Trapelo Road from McLean and is legally an abutter, asked the Belmont Conservation Commission to take another look at Junction Brook. The Belmont Citizens Forum hired a hydrologist, Patrick Garner of Northborough, for a professional opinion. He found the brook to be perennial, and, at our request, prepared a report for the Conservation Commission.

A big issue at the ConCom hearings was what's called "dewatering." Pat Garner had observed that McLean was pumping ground water from an area near Junction Brook. In his report, Pat asked, "Why was the pumping being conducted in March? . . . During what months is the pumping normally conducted? For how many years has a ground water dewatering system been in place?" As Pat pointed out, the state regulation reads: "Rivers and streams which are perennial under natural conditions but affected by drawdown from withdrawals of water supply wells or direct withdrawals shall be considered perennial."

McLean made available maps of its under-

Continued on page 10