

The Arlington Land Trust is a community-based nonprofit organization established in 2000 to protect undeveloped land in Arlington. As a membership organization, ALT accepts donations and welcomes volunteers to support its work.

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The Central School, housing the Senior Center and other services, is one of Arlington's historic properties that could be restored and innovated with CPA funds.

Arlington Adopts the Community Preservation Act

It was a ten-month journey from the Arlington Land Trust's Annual Meeting presentation about the Community Preservation Act (CPA) last January to its adoption on November 4, 2014. The CPA is a very successful state program that has been approved by 158 towns and cities across Massachusetts (45 percent of 351 communities). It provides tools to make investments in open space protection, outdoor recreation, community housing, and historic preservation.

The first step in Arlington was to prepare a warrant article and get the 2014 Town Meeting to approve a CPA question for the

ballot in November. A dedicated team of Town Meeting members and supporters succeeded in making the case, and Town Meeting voted 2 to 1 to put the initiative before the town's electorate.

This same dedicated team subsequently expanded its ranks and met throughout the summer to prepare for the fall Yes on Question 5 campaign. Led by Selectman Joe Curro and Town Meeting member Susan Stamps, a core group of more than 20 volunteers represented various open space and recreation, historic preservation, and community housing interests. They all worked tirelessly to develop a message and put together a website and a

Facebook page to spread the word about the Act. The CPA is a rather complicated law that cannot be explained in small sound bites and simple slogans, but Arlington voters understood the benefits of the CPA and voted 54 to 46 percent—a 1,500 vote majority—to support the CPA.

Next Steps

Now that the Community Preservation Act has been adopted, the next step is for a 2015 Town Meeting to approve a local bylaw that accords with state guidelines, including creation of a Community Preservation Committee (CPC). This group will be charged with making its recommendations on CPA projects to Town Meeting for approval each year. No CPA projects can be funded without a favorable vote of Town Meeting.

By state statute, five members of the CPC will represent existing commissions and authorities: one member each from the Park and Recreation Commission, Arlington Redevelopment Board, Arlington Housing Authority, Conservation Commission, and Historical Commission. Town Meeting may also decide whether to add up to four other members, who could be elected or appointed by the Board of Selectmen, the Town Moderator, or some combination. For example, one might be appointed by the Selectmen, one by the Moderator, and two could be elected.

Some of the potential CPA projects that drew broad interest from residents during the campaign are:

- restoring and preserving historic buildings, such as the Central School, home of the Senior Center and other valued community services, and other historic sites, such as the Winfield Robbins Memorial Garden next to Town Hall;
- preserving or restoring land for conservation, wildlife habitat, and flood control, such as the Mugar land in East Arlington;
- refurbishing recreational facilities such as the playgrounds at Magnolia Park and Wellington Park; and
- providing more affordable housing for local residents, such as the Housing Corporation of Arlington's proposed renovations of the historic Kimball Farmer House on Mass. Ave. and another property on Westminster Street.

The Land Trust has been a strong advocate of the CPA because of these benefits that it can bring to our community. To learn how CPA works and has contributed to projects in other towns, visit the state-wide Community Preservation Coalition's website at www.communitypreservation.org.

Please continue to support CPA as Town Meeting enters the next phase this spring, and thanks again to everyone who came out to support its adoption in November.



Dear Arlington Land Trust Members and Friends,

Last spring I had the honor of being elected as the new president of the Arlington Land Trust, taking the reins from Clarissa Rowe, our very capable founding member and outgoing president.

This was a great year for land conservation. I am especially pleased that Land Trust board members Clarissa Rowe and Brian Rehrig worked tirelessly with many others to make the case for the adoption of the Community Preservation Act in Arlington, one of three towns to adopt the CPA this year. We now have a new tool in our tool-box for land protection, habitat restoration, historic preservation, community housing, and outdoor recreation—all community needs that don't always make it to the top of tight town budgets, but help make towns like Arlington great places to live.

It's inspiring to know that over 21,000 acres have been protected in CPA communities since the law was signed by former Governor Paul Celluci in 2000. I'd love to see the Arlington's Great Meadows and the Mugar site near the Alewife Brook Reservation added to that list of preserved open spaces. Thank you to everyone who supported this effort.

Our own special property, Elizabeth Island, was featured in the *Arlington Advocate* this summer. While I was out there giving a tour to reporter Spencer Buell and his photographer, the Arlington Boys and Girls Club summer kayak campers paddled up and played King of the Kayak right off the shore. We're so thankful that strong community support helped to ensure that the island is protected and open to the public forever. That's what our work is all about.

We are now an organization of close to 300 member households. We truly appreciate your support!

Thank you, and have a great 2015.

Jennifer Ryan
President

ALT Member Profile - Carolyn and George Parsons

Courtesy Photo



Carolyn and George Parsons bought their Brewster Road home in the southwestern corner of Arlington more than 40 years ago, simply because of the setting. Their land abuts and includes sweeping views of the Belmont Country Club to the rear, and the sunny yard was ideal for creating a soothing garden, which is now filled year round with colorful native plants, veggies, and shrubs. "We especially treasure local open spaces such as Arlington's Great Meadows, the Minuteman Bikeway, footpaths around Spy Pond, and Elizabeth Island." They are long-term members of ALT, in part due to ALT's efforts to enhance and expand these types of local resources, and they are active in many local organizations. Recently they both served on the steering committee that successfully advocated for Arlington's adoption of the Community Preservation Act.



Visitors to Elizabeth Island enjoy the new path.

Stewardship and Fun Days at Elizabeth Island

During a regular stewardship visit to Elizabeth Island early last spring, ALT board members Peter Belknap and Ted Siegan encountered an avian crime scene: several Canada geese bodies and skeletons were scattered along the shore. Since no mammal predators live on the island, we can only assume a hungry coyote or fox swam out to the island for some easy hunting. These animals are regularly seen in Arlington and both are known to be good swimmers. No one saw the carnage happen, so we can only guess.

Later in the spring, Peter and Ted paddled out again to rake the walking path on the north side of the island. They, with others, will continue to maintain the path every spring and late summer to facilitate clear and safe access around the island. We've also been working with Mass Audubon's extension program to figure out the best way to control the erosion along a few spots on the trail. We hope to have an application ready for review by the Conservation Commission this winter and do the trail work next spring. We'll put out a call for more volunteers then. In the meantime, Elizabeth Island is open to the public and can be visited at any time by private boat or by walking or skating on the iced-over pond, if the winter is cold enough to allow safe passage.

Saturday, September 6, was another glorious late summer day for the now annual Spy Pond Fun Day sponsored by the Friends of Spy Pond Park. Once again, the Arlington Land Trust coordinated boat trips

and guided tours of Elizabeth Island, with the help of Arlington-Belmont Crew members who ferried visitors back and forth in their two small motor boats. Nearly 90 people were able to walk around the island, most of them for the first time, and more than half of the delighted explorers were children.

ALT board members Ted Siegan and Ann LeRoyer and member Susan Stamps greeted the visitors and guided them around the island, while board member Peter Belknap and his wife Jennifer Snodgrass coordinated launches and landings with the crew members at the boat ramp. Ted's natural history tours introduced visitors to the trees and plants involved in forest succession around the two-acre island, and pointed out signs of wildlife activity.

Other events in Spy Pond Park and on the island in 2015 will include a Spy Pond Splash and Family Fun Day on Saturday, May 30! Watch for more details next spring.

Progress at the Reservoir and Wildlife Habitat Garden

2014 was a busy year for the Arlington Reservoir Committee of Vision 2020. In the fourth growing season some plants in the Wildlife Habitat Garden, such as the grasses, did very well and needed thinning, while a few bare spots needed some more plantings. The core volunteer group held a number of workdays and had help from many others who weeded and watered on their own. We added a new kiosk to the garden area to provide more information about the plants and animals in the garden.

We have also expanded our activities in the parking lot island, where we cleared invasive species and planted or transplanted a number of new shrubs and wildflowers. A major project this year, with the help of many volunteers from a local Mormon congregation, was the cutting back of the invasive Japanese Knotweed along the path from the parking lot to the garden. Now the area is much more open and inviting.

Water chestnut harvesting continued this summer under the management of DPW, along with volunteers in canoes who cleared some shallow areas. In future years, the volume should be less because the harvesting removes the seeds that produce new plants. This work was funded by the Arlington Water Bodies Fund, as approved by Town Meeting.

For more information and photos, visit the Reservoir website at www.arlington2020.org/reservoir.

Former Symmes Site Provides New Open Space in Arlington

Town residents can now enjoy two new parks and other dedicated conservation areas as a result of the development of the former Symmes Hospital site off Summer Street. These new open spaces constitute about 8.7 acres of the approximately 18-acre site. The Conservation Restriction and Public Access Agreement (CR) signed earlier this year by the developer, the Arlington Land Trust, and the Town of Arlington Conservation Commission will ensure these areas will always be accessible in the future.

Development Process

In 2001 Town Meeting voted to purchase the Symmes property in order to have a say in how the large site would be developed. With commanding views toward Boston and a steep, partially wooded terrain, the site had the potential to be a major redevelopment opportunity with significant impacts on the Town.

After a lengthy public process and delays associated with the downturn in the economy in 2008, construction finally began in the spring of 2012 on a large residential condominium and apartment project at the top of the property. Arlington 360, LLC has built 164 rental apartments and 12 townhouse condominiums. All of the townhouses have been sold, and the apartment rentals have been brisk, including the 20 percent of rental units

that are permanently affordable for low- and moderate-income individuals and families.

In early 2013, Arlington 360 modified the approved development plan, which had called for a medical office building, parking garage, and additional residential units near Summer Street. Instead, a two-acre portion of the Symmes site was sold to Shelter/Brightview Arlington for a 90-unit assisted living facility. Construction of that structure began in early 2013 and was completed in the summer of 2014. One benefit of this modification has been the provision of additional acreage for conservation.

Commemorative Parks and Woods

Most of the new open space that Town residents can now enjoy is on the portion of the site owned by Arlington 360, which is required to maintain these facilities for the benefit of the public. This land includes the half-acre Hattie Symmes Park, named for the daughter of the hospital founder, with its commanding views over Arlington and Boston to the east. This park features an open green lawn, benches, extensive landscaping, and historical markers recounting the development of the hospital site over more than a century.

Part way down the hill, the two-acre Nora A. Brown Park honors the long-time head of the nurses' facility formerly located on this part of the site. This park is designed

for passive recreation and offers views of the Boston skyline framed through the trees. It contains porous pathways, mowed strips within an open meadow area, and landscaped beds, as well as some benches and picnic tables.


In the relatively flat area between Summer Street and the Brightview Arlington assisted living facility lies the major area of the Symmes Woods, a remnant of the former Town forest that had been neglected for years. Debris had slid down the steep slope and into the woods during the construction process, and a portion of the area was disturbed to allow for a temporary sales facility for Brightview Arlington. The woods have now been cleared of debris, and the disturbed area replanted with native grasses and trees.

Friends of Symmes

The Arlington Land Trust and Arlington Conservation Commission, as co-holders of the CR, are fostering the creation of the Friends of Symmes Conservation Area, including residents of Arlington 360 and the surrounding neighborhood, to provide input – and hands-on help – in improving the health and appearance of the protected areas. Decisions will be guided by a Forest Management Plan created with the assistance of a certified arborist, and will include whether and where to locate foot trails and what new species of trees should be planted.

If you are interested in joining the Friends of Symmes Conservation Area, please contact Karen Johnson via email at kpj64@comcast.net. The next planning meeting for the group will be held in late February.

Richard A. Duffy



Nora A. Brown Park covers the hillside as seen from Hattie Symmes Park, which offers a captivating vista of Arlington, Cambridge, and Boston to the south and east.

Arlington Land Trust Annual Meeting

Many Lives of a Landscape: Colorful Changes Through the Centuries at “Symmes Hospital Hill”

Richard A. Duffy

Enjoy a fast-paced, illustrated history of land use at the former site of Symmes Hospital, home today to the Arlington 360 residential development, the Brightview assisted living complex, two public parks, and protected woodland.

Richard A. Duffy is a popular regional historian, author, and ALT member who presented the fascinating history of Elizabeth Island at our annual meeting and celebration in January 2011.

**Tuesday, January 27, 2015
7–9 pm**

**Arlington Senior Center
27 Maple Street
Arlington, Massachusetts**

Friends of Arlington’s Great Meadows Enters Its Second Decade

The Friends of Arlington’s Great Meadows (FoAGM) was established in 2002, and its 2012 annual report commemorated a decade of stewardship. Great Meadows is a 183-acre parcel of land owned by the Town of Arlington, located in East Lexington, and bordering the Minuteman Bikeway—the largest undeveloped natural landscape in the Arlington/Lexington area.

Once a glacial lake, AGM is now a wetland surrounded by uplands that were created by glacial outwash. The land was acquired by Arlington in 1871 to serve as a supplementary water storage area, but was only briefly used for that purpose. As part of the Mystic River watershed, AGM remains a valuable buffer against downstream flooding in the Arlington Reservoir and along Mill Brook, and it provides a rich habitat for local wildlife.

The Friends group has worked diligently to protect, preserve, and enhance the natural beauty and ecology of this

unique open space and to make it a more attractive place for residents of Arlington, Lexington, and elsewhere to take walks, cycle, learn, find sanctuary and tranquility, and otherwise enjoy. The group seeks to raise public awareness of its existence and to plan for its long-term preservation in its natural state.

Major accomplishments from 2002 through 2012 include construction of two boardwalks and a footbridge; maintenance of trails; removal of trash; educational programs; control of invasive plants; and restoration of an upland meadow area.

David White



Clearing of Japanese Knotweed has opened up views of Great Meadows from the Minuteman Bikeway.

More recently FoAGM has:

- produced a new guide map for AGM which is posted on the kiosks and available on the website;
- mowed the upland entry meadow to preserve its scenic beauty and promote habitat diversity;
- continued with invasive plant control,

especially along the Minuteman Bikeway; and

- worked with ACROSS Lexington in establishing a walking path that includes AGM.

FoAGM is led by a volunteer steering committee and seeks anyone who enjoys this area and would like to help care for it. Income for activities comes from individual donations, with occasional grants for special projects.

FoAGM continues its successful partnership with the Arlington Land Trust, which serves as fiscal agent. Donations to support this work can be sent to the Arlington Land Trust, P.O. Box 492, Arlington, MA 02476. For more information, visit www.foagm.org.

ALT Member Profile Stephan Miller and Terry Dash

Courtesy Photo



Stephan Miller moved to Arlington as a graduate student the early 1970s, and was joined by Terry Dash in the early 1990s. Stephan is a long-time member of the Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee, the Arlington Reservoir Committee, and the Arlington Garden Club. Terry teaches computer science at the Ottoson Middle School and was chair of the Symmes Neighborhood Advisory Committee. “We joined the Arlington Land Trust because we have witnessed the increasing urbanization of Arlington over the last 40 years and wanted to help preserve and maintain some of the remaining open space. In order to have a more hands on experience, we also became the land stewards for Cooke’s Hollow, a little known but very pleasant and quiet retreat bordering Mill Brook near the center of Arlington.”

Plans for Arlington’s Future

Since the fall of 2012, Arlington has been involved in an extensive planning process to develop a Master Plan for the next 20 years or more. Many public meetings and surveys have been held to gather information from residents about their visions and concerns for the Town’s future. An appointed Master Plan Advisory Committee has been working with the staff of the Department of Planning and Community Development and consultants from RKG Associates to document the process.

A number of draft reports have been prepared, including working papers on land use, transportation, economic development, housing, open space and natural resources, historic and cultural resources, and public services and facilities, including recreational facilities. These background papers, and the draft Master Plan are available online at www.arlingtonma.gov/planning.

The final plan is scheduled to be presented to the Arlington Redevelopment Board (ARB) on Monday, January 12, 2015 at 7 pm in Town Hall, and to Town Meeting in April or May. By law, the ARB adopts the master plan and oversees its implementation.

During the past year, the Town’s Open Space Committee has also been working on an update of the current Open Space and Recreation Plan that was approved by the Massachusetts Department of Energy and Environmental Affairs (Division of Conservation Services) through 2014. The revised plan will extend from 2015 to 2022, and has to be approved by the state. It will also be presented

for endorsement to the Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting.

Because these two planning processes were occurring simultaneously, much of the information was shared and the goals and objectives were reinforced. In terms of accomplishments over the past seven years since the prior Open Space Plan, highlights include the ALT’s acquisition and protection of Elizabeth Island, ALT’s role in establishing and protecting nearly nine acres of public open space at the former Symmes Hospital site, and progress on dealing invasive plants, especially in our water bodies.

Among the goals for the future are recognition of the integrated historic, environmental, and economic development potential of the Mill Brook corridor, the need to fully protect Arlington’s Great Meadows in Lexington and the Mugar land for both conservation and flood control purposes, and the need for better maintenance of all Town open spaces and natural resources, including valued street trees.

New Group Supports Winfield Robbins Memorial Garden

Organizers of a new Friends of the Winfield Robbins Memorial Garden have been meeting to establish a group dedicated to the preservation and upkeep of the Winfield Robbins Memorial Garden, sometimes called the Town Garden, located between Town Hall and the Robbins Library.

Dedicated in 1913, the garden is the setting for the statue, “Menotomy Indian Hunter,” by the American sculptor, Cyrus Dallin, an Arlington resident for most of his life. John Lane of Academy Street comments, “The statue is a treasure and needs to be the aesthetic center of the town, as it has been in the past.”

In 1939 the Town Garden was re-designed by the Olmsted Brothers, the firm founded by the sons of Frederic Law Olmsted, who “sought to create ‘a perspective effect,’ increasing the sense of space contrasting dark foreground forms with light, less distinct ones farther away.”

For information about the garden and this group, please contact Catherine Hirani at cbh101@verizon.net.



Ann LeRoy

The Winfield Robbins Memorial Garden will be getting help from volunteers, and some special features could be repaired with CPA funds.

Thanks to you! The Arlington Land Trust thanks its members and friends for their generous contributions in 2014.

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UPCOMING EVENTS: Spring 2015

ALT Membership Renewal

If you have not already renewed your ALT membership for 2015, please respond to our annual mailing, go to the website (www.arlingtonlandtrust.org) to download a copy of the membership form, or sign up at www.networkforgood.org to renew online. Thank you again for your continuing support. If you have any questions, please contact ALT at info@arlingtonlandtrust.org.

EcoFest

The 2015 EcoFest event on **Saturday, March 7**, 10 am to 2 pm at Town Hall will focus on energy awareness and related issues: "EnergyWise: Sparking Local Solutions." Cosponsored by Sustainable Arlington/Vision 2020, the Department of Public Works, and the Arlington Garden Club,

this annual program presents lectures, family activities, and information booths with both local nonprofit organizations and commercial vendors of sustainable products. This year the celebration of the environment will look at energy—how we make it, use it, measure it, and conserve it.

Mass Land Conservation Conference

The 25th annual conference of the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition (www.massland.org) will be held on **Saturday, March 21**, in Worcester. The theme this year is "Gaining Ground: Conserving Our Common Wealth." The conference succeeds on the strength of the sessions offered by the land community for the land community, and participants range from students to seasoned experts. The 2015 workshop tracks will be:

- Conserving Our Common Wealth and Emerging Issues

- Land Management and Stewardship
- Land Protection Tools and Techniques
- Legal, Tax and Compliance Matters
- Organizational Management and Fundraising
- Urban Conservation and Greening

Spy Pond Splash and Family Fun Day

The Spy Pond Committee of Vision 2020 is planning a special event at Spy Pond Park on **Saturday, May 30**, the weekend after Memorial Day. The Arlington Land Trust, Boys and Girls Club, Mystic River Watershed Association, Friends of Spy Pond Park, and Arlington Public Arts Committee are among the cosponsors already lined up. Activities will include visits to Elizabeth Island, children's art and nature projects, trimming of bushes and removal of invasive plants, Bluegrass music, rowing lessons, a boat parade, and more.

Annual Meeting
**Many Lives of a Landscape:
Colorful Change
Through the Centuries at
"Symmes Hospital Hill"**
with Richard A. Duffy
**January 27, 2015
7-9 pm**
Arlington Senior Center
27 Maple Street
Arlington, Massachusetts

P.O. Box 492
Arlington, MA 02476

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