

CHESTNUT HILL ASSOCIATION, INC.
P.O. BOX 67173 • CHESTNUT HILL, MA 02467-0002
WWW.CHANEWTON.ORG

November 2017

Dear Neighbors,

Fall is here, and we want to update you on several news items, most of which you won't find on the front page of the Globe. With nice weather and Halloween just past, it's a little easier to forget the season-ending downfall of the Red Sox. We can now shift our support to the Patriots, Bruins and Celtics.

Thanks for your financial support!

Many of you continue to support the Association with your dues and donations. We hope you will recommend the CHA to your friends and any new neighbors. We will be glad to send them information and membership forms if you just send us their names and addresses.

CURRENT EVENTS

November 7 Election of a new Mayor of Newton plus Vote on new City Charter

Newton voters will elect a new mayor on November 7 in a runoff between the two highest vote getters in the September Primary. We will also approve or reject the proposed new City Charter. A quick walk around the neighborhood shows widespread support for Ruthanne Fuller (former president of the CHA) the primary winner. Her opponent is Scott Lennon, current president of the City Council. *The Newton TAB has just strongly endorsed Ruthanne Fuller for Mayor.*

Charter Commission proposals

The Newton TAB has also just recommended a NO Vote on the proposed new City Charter.

Newton's Charter Commission's recommendation is a proposed 50% reduction in the City Council from 24 members to 12. Benefits suggested include a more efficient leadership with each member assuming a larger job with more influence in City-wide issues. However, the proposal would by definition reduce the influence and accessibility of current neighborhood representatives. Voters will decide November 7. There is serious interest in an alternative approach that would ensure local representation of two council members per ward. Some voters suggest that things are working fine, but further consideration of such a fundamental shift in power is worth exploring. Let's avoid "buyer's remorse."

Newton's Budget Problems

The City Budget for Fiscal 2018 projected a major shortfall for Public Schools which could lead to layoffs of staff and other problems. Like cities everywhere, Newton must deal with rising costs for healthcare, retirement benefits, and a seemingly growing backlog of projects lacking needed funds. The shortfall is not discussed widely enough, but it amounts to more than a billion dollars including capital items and retiree benefits. City officials should explain candidly how we will cope with the current and projected costs. This must be at the top of the new mayor's list of priorities.

Accessory Apartments

We'd like to see an update about "accessory apartments." There must be many long-term Newton residents who want like to downsize their living space without moving away. Converting part of their current homes to provide separate space for older family members might be one answer.

If this succeeds in providing additional housing in Newton, some might reasonably object to more construction and congestion. Other homeowners who have been renting out their spare rooms to students may need to register such "apartments" to comply with the new rules. If you want more info, see www.newtonma.gov and "Inspectional Services Department", or call 617-796-1060.

Newton Public Schools Projects

Two out of three major public school projects are finished as Zervas elementary school opened for classes in September. A total overhaul of Cabot School is moving ahead, scheduled to open in 2019.

Local Real Estate Update

Recent mailings indicate that sales of single-family homes and condos continue strong in Newton and Brookline. Transactions are typically settled at or very close to listing prices, normally within a couple of points above or below. The numbers of days on the market range from 27 days for condos to 57 days for single-family homes. The mid-range prices attract the quickest sale, with single-family homes over \$2.million taking longer. Interest rates continue below 4%. Such rates are appealing to those contemplating a new kitchen, additions to the footprint or a total renovation.

In Other News

Boston College

The BC football team is having better results this season, thanks to some powerful and talented new additions. With three straight wins in the recent weeks, they have raised their season to five wins to three losses. There are three remaining games: NC State at Chestnut Hill on November 11; Connecticut on November 18 at 7 p.m. *in Fenway Park*, Boston; and November 25 at Syracuse.

A big issue, and we mean BIG, is the construction now underway on Beacon Street of a mammoth new structure to house an indoor practice field for sports teams. What we used to know as Shea Field is now just a memory. This is just one of several BC projects underway in both Chestnut Hill and Brighton. We hope to corral some representatives from the college to bring us up to date on their plans. Stay tuned for more details and perhaps a meeting we can all attend. We need more info, timetable, and plans.

Waban Hill Reservoir Progress

Plans underway for the Waban Hill Reservoir (by Ward Street and Manet Road) will lead to further improvements for the five-acre site. The Friends of Waban Hill are planning the next phase of improvements for passive recreation, such as walking, bird watching, exercise, meditation, or child play. The entire area has been cleaned up, with lots of help from the Friends of Waban Hill and the Newton Parks & Recreation Department, the guardian of this special open space. More to come.

Needham Street

Traffic is never nice on Needham Street, and the current mammoth construction projects suggest that relief is a long way off. It's also odd that so much new retail space is coming online as "bricks and mortar" shopping is dying, thanks to the enormous growth in internet/online commerce. It could be a very long wait until there are no vacancies. Your roving reporter recently visited Copley Place in the heart of Boston, where in the most upscale stores (Tiffany, Louis Vuitton, Neiman-Marcus) actual customers were hard to spot even at lunchtime. Have you visited the Chestnut Hill Mall recently?!

Animal News

New Landscaping Crew in the Old Deer Park

Thanks to some great collaboration between the City's Conservation Commission, (Jennfier Steel in particular!), Parks & Recreation (forestry team) and local citizens, the former Deer Park, which closed many years ago when the last deer died, has a resident work crew of 30 goats. These gentle creatures are on duty 24/7, cleaning up the undergrowth, invasive vines, poison ivy, low growth shrubs, and lots of other plant life. They are remarkably hard-working, easy to get along with, and well behaved. Thanks to Sean and Sonya Wilder, who own the adjacent property, the goats have plenty of water, and someone is there in case of trouble. Depending on the amount of progress accomplished, they may be there until mid-November.

Turkeys and Coyotes

If you haven't seen wild turkeys around your home, consider yourself lucky. We've had 12-15 at one time, young boys, girls, and chicks in one big family. (Lots of hens but usually only one leading man.) They are very unafraid and noisy and if you don't chase them away, they will sleep on your car or your garage roof. The longer you allow them to stay, the longer they will. They can hurt you if you give them a chance, and small children should not approach them. Their claws and spurs are dangerous.

The coyotes are less obvious but they are still nearby. We're trying to encourage the coyotes to organize a big Thanksgiving turkey dinner. The nesting/breeding season for coyotes is late winter. When new litters are born, the parents are especially hungry, looking for food to feed their babies. Watch out for your dogs and cats (and other small pets) because coyotes are more aggressive when there are many more mouths to feed. Recent research has discovered that many of the Eastern Coyotes are inbred with wolves from the North and West. They are highly mobile, travel long distances overnight, and have learned to look both ways before crossing busy streets, e.g., Hammond Street.

Off-leash Dog Parks are Happy Parks in Newton

Of seven current off-leash dog parks, our favorite is McGrath Park, located just off Washington Street in West Newton, near the Commonwealth Avenue intersection. It is small, completely fenced in, has free parking right next to the athletic fields, and is open daily from dawn to dusk. Special tags are available for an extra fee at City Hall. Bring your dog out to play! You will both have fun.

Holidays are Coming!

One gift that is truly unique and not available in stores is a two-book set on the History of Chestnut Hill, originally published many years ago. We still have several copies available for a bargain price of \$20. Please send your orders to the CHA at P.O. Box 67173, Chestnut Hill MA 02467. It's handy and useful guide to the lore of Chestnut Hill and its origins as a "country" village in ye olden days. It could be a nice gift for new neighbors, real estate brokers, or your favorite City Council Members.

With the approach of the holiday season, many local organizations are having special events. One of the nicest and easy to find is the Church of the Redeemer Christmas Market on December 1 and 2. It's an easy way to buy a tree, holiday wreaths, and gifts that are special or hard to find elsewhere.

Our Goal is to Grow the CHA Membership

For many years we have had a solid membership, and your support has enabled us to stay in touch, sponsor social events, and hold useful and informative meetings on topics and issues of current importance. We are putting special emphasis this fall on gaining new members, both those who are new to Newton and others who have not been ready to join. Many of our senior citizens move south or migrate to other parts of Greater Boston, and we need to identify new neighbors who might enjoy being part of the CHA. We continue to feature local and useful information on our website: chanewton.org. Please send us your email addresses, so we can communicate with you quickly, easily, and avoid mailing costs. You should know that we do not provide our mailing list to anyone else.

New Committee Members

We are glad to report that we have recruited some new members to our Executive Committee to strengthen our ability to serve you ...our neighbors. They represent a good cross section of Chestnut Hill. We'll provide more details after we have a scheduled meeting to welcome them.

To join: please complete and mail this form with your check for \$50 OR MORE. Thank you!

**MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION: Mail the following information with your check to:
Chestnut Hill Association Box 67173 Chestnut Hill MA 02467**

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____ **EMAIL** _____

PAYMENT: \$50 ___ \$75 ___ \$100 ___ \$150 ___ \$ ___ (Dues are not deductible for tax purposes.)

Please send notices or newsletters via Email _____ US Mail _____ (check one