

FRIENDS OF SAXONVILLE

NEWSLETTER • SUMMER 2017

Friends Propose New McGrath Square Design

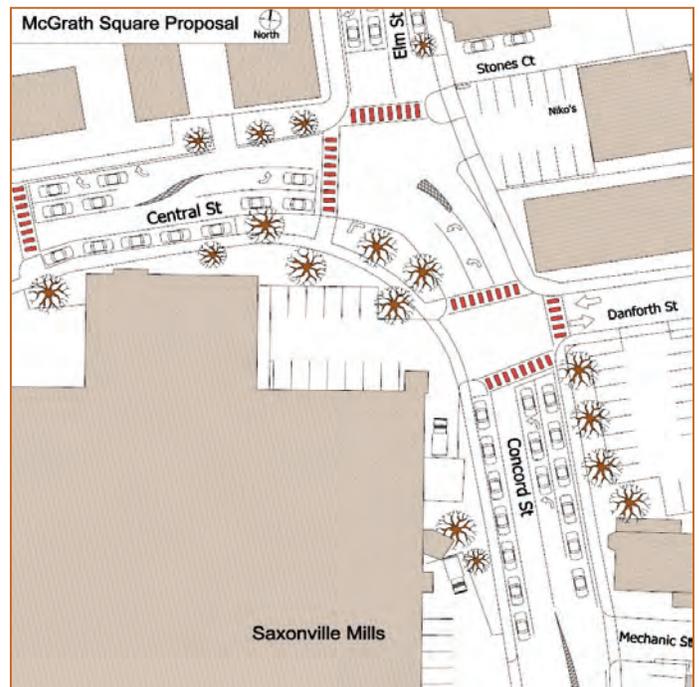
by Steven Weisman

The FOS Village Center Improvement Committee opened a dialogue this winter with the Department of Public Works (DPW) to influence and help guide a Town-proposed upgrade of streets and sidewalks in McGrath Square and its approaches from Concord, Danforth, Water, Central, and Elm Streets. This will be the first comprehensive upgrade of McGrath Square's public infrastructure in over 50 years.

FOS's McGrath Square objectives are to:

- Invite increased pedestrian activity in and around the Square
- Calm motorized vehicles to promote on-foot and bicycle traffic
- Facilitate local commerce and business, working with property owners
- Celebrate Saxonville's history
- Mitigate the visual blight in the Square from years of deferred maintenance

(Continued on page 2)



Saxonville Mills Complex © Herb Everett

RiverFest! Join Us for Guided Walks Saturday, June 17, 2017

Saxonville Dam, Falls and Levee Walk

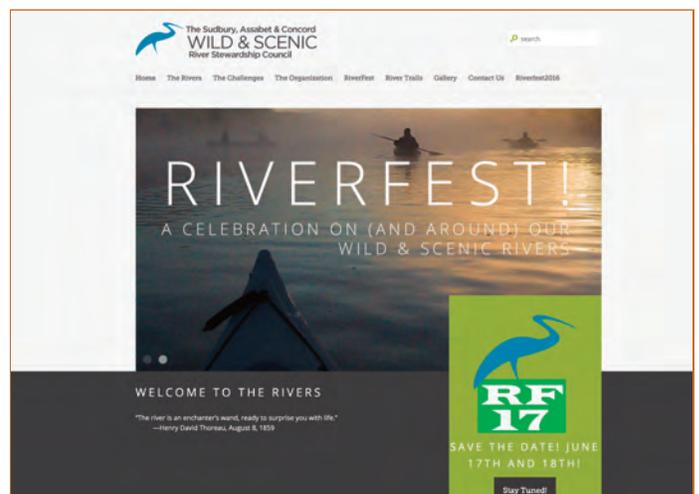
9:00 am (rain or shine)

Framingham/Wayland Historic River Walk

1:30 pm (rain or shine). Meet at end of Little Farms Road

Contact Lynne Damianos at 508.341.8210 for details.

For a complete list of events, visit www.sudbury-assabet-concord.org.



FOS Seeks Volunteers for June 24 River Clean Up by Steven Weisman

The Sudbury River defines the center of Saxonville village and is its reason for being. As part of our effort to maintain its health and recreational value, FOS has identified a number of areas along the River and its tributaries in Saxonville where inappropriately discarded materials are fouling the riverbanks and should be removed.

To that end, FOS is seeking individuals interested in participating in an organized Sudbury River clean-up day on June from 9 am to noon. This event will complement and be in addition to the annual September River Clean Up that is sponsored by OARS for the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Rivers.

FOS is working with the Framingham Conservation Commission to get logistical support for this effort from the Department of Public Works for trash removal.

Areas of focus will be the river impoundment behind the Saxonville Dam along Water and Central Streets as well as along Cochituate Brook at the start of the Cochituate Rail Trail. Additional areas may be added as they are identified.

If you are interested in assisting with this important and worthwhile effort, please contact Ron Chick at ronchick@comcast.net. ❖

Undeniable Need by Jan Harrington

If cancellation of the Friends of Saxonville's Annual Meeting does not cry out for restoration of Athenaeum Hall as a Saxonville Community Center, what would? The Annual Meeting was planned for Thursday evening, April 13th. A half dozen speakers were scheduled - all ready to present pertinent new details relating to the village of Saxonville and its surroundings. Flyers were printed. Email blasts were sent. Refreshments were purchased. Fireseed Arts, a delightful and inviting incubator space for sustainable, environmental art projects and businesses within the Mill Complex, was the chosen gathering place.

On Wednesday, April 12th, we learned that our venue would not be accessible to the handicapped interested in attending. Board Members immediately attempted to find a solution, but were unsuccessful. Let the history of the Friends of Saxonville document the above-mentioned need.

"The Disability Commission supports any project that brings buildings into compliance with state and federal access laws which would include the Athenaeum and would enable people with disabilities to attend any community meetings or events." – Karen Foran Dempsey, Chair, Framingham Disability Commission ❖

Town Renews Athenaeum Landscaping by Steven Weisman

At the request of FOS, the Framingham Parks and Recreation Department has replaced the old, tired hedges surrounding the front of historic Athenaeum Hall in Saxonville with new decorative fencing, plantings of annuals and perennials, and a new lawn. The planting was completed by Framingham employees of Bose as one of their voluntary community work projects.

The newly installed landscaping is the first sign of the rebirth of this Saxonville and Framingham treasure, marking the start of Phase One of the renewal of the Athenaeum property as Framingham's Athenaeum Community Hall.

The restoration of Saxonville's 19th century Athenaeum Hall has been a goal of FOS for over 20 years. Finally, using funds

appropriated by Town Meeting in 2016, Framingham has embarked on the plan to restore Saxonville's Athenaeum, once the village hall, as a new civic center that will host a range of public and private meetings, musical and dramatic performances, forums, art displays, and even exhibits of artifacts from Saxonville's rich history.

FOS hopes that the Town will also install benches as part of its landscaping, making the Athenaeum's front yard Saxonville Village's first public park. ❖



© Damianos Photography

Friends Propose a New Design for McGrath Square (continued from page 1)

Responding positively to the Committee's desire to participate in the planning process, in April, the DPW shared conceptual plans developed by its consultant Green International with the Committee. The DPW asked that FOS provide feedback and any ideas we had for improving the plans.

Meeting with the DPW again in early May, the Committee shared its own design drawings and specifications for the Square. The Committee's proposal suggests a new geometry for the Square and its approaches. This design will improve walkability in the square, increase bicycle safety, reduce the areas dedicated to moving traffic, increase sidewalk widths, add on-street parking on Concord Street for patrons of local businesses, allow Danforth Street to be opened to two-way

traffic once again, and create green areas and add tree plantings in the center of the Square. The key concepts in the Committee's design were: move the signaled stop line for northbound traffic on Concord Street out of the Square to below Danforth Street; and re-purpose the over-sized or under-used traffic lanes in the center of the Square for other public purposes.

The Committee's proposed plan is currently being considered by the DPW and its consultants. The Committee anticipates additional meetings with the DPW as final plans continue to be developed. DPW hopes to begin construction in 2018. ❖

Pinefield Drive-Thru Plans Scrapped

by Steven Weisman

FOS has been notified that Pinefield Shopping Plaza has abandoned plans to construct a new building at the intersection of Water Street and Nicholas Road that would have housed a Dunkin Donuts restaurant with a drive-thru window.

Earlier this year, after the plans for the proposed drive-thru restaurant were turned down by the Town's Building Department as a non-conforming use prohibited by Town zoning in this location, the Plaza's owner brought his request to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). The ZBA approved the drive-thru restaurant proposal, but the ZBA ruling was challenged by abutters to the property in a complaint to State Land Court.



© Damianos Photography

In the face of the abutters' legal challenge, the Plaza owner and the ZBA elected to not continue the legal proceeding, and the owner's attorney has indicated that no further development is planned for this location at this time.

Framingham's Economic Development Investment Corporation (EDIC) had identified Pinefield Shopping Center in a 2016 study of Saxonville as a key parcel in the future revitalization of Saxonville Village. The study imagined a future mix of commercial and residential development on the site, consistent with the historic character of the former mill village. ❖

Annual Meeting Report A Wealth of Information about Saxonville's Future

by Gina Offenstine

The 2017 FOS Annual Meeting took place on Monday the May 22. Despite the rainy weather, many visitors arrived to hear what is in store for the next couple of years. President David Longden opened the meeting. Town Manager Bob Halpin spoke about a proposed new fire station to be built on property once controlled by the High School on A Street. He also indicated there are plans to renovate the Athenaeum and make Watson Place a walkable, friendly civic place where people can come together, meet and enjoy the area.

Paul Barden of the DPW walked us through a plan to create new gateway signs which will tie Framingham together and allow folks to have a better understanding of various neighborhood wayfinding. He also previewed ideas for the McGrath Square Village Improvement and complimented the efforts of FOS who have worked hard for the past year to make suggestions and allow town managers to have a better

look at needed changes in the Square. Watch our website for updates.

Jennifer Doherty was happy to announce a grant from the State of Massachusetts to study our village and the historic relevance it has in our State. She passed out a map which outlined the areas included in this preliminary grant to make Saxonville a historic district.

Ron Chick and Rob MacArthur updated us on the progress of the Conservation Commission's action to address the invasive plant crisis on the Sudbury River. A five year plan is in the works to control the "Eurasian Water Chestnut" through chemical treatments.

Lynne Damianos introduced the new FOS website, which will be easy to navigate and keep everyone up to date on all the exciting happenings here in our great Village of Saxonville. ❖

FOS Business Members

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Town Moves Forward with Plan to Eradicate Water Chestnuts from the Sudbury River

by Ron Chick, FOS River Stewards Chair

The Framingham Conservation Commission and the DPW have received Town Meeting funding to begin a multi-year effort to control and eliminate water chestnuts in the Saxonville section of the Sudbury River. This non-native and extremely invasive vegetation has made the Saxonville section of the river unsuitable for most native species to thrive and unfit for recreational use during the summer.

Successive hand spraying of a state and federally approved in June and July of this year will begin to resolve this problem.

A big thank-you to the DPW Commissioner Peter Sellers and Assistant Commissioner Paul Barden, Framingham Conservation Commission members and Chairman Bob Bois, Conservation Commission Administrator Rob McArthur, Assistant Administrators Kimberly Burlingame and Clay Hutchinson for their efforts. ❖



Sudbury River © Ron Chick

FOS Trivia

by Stephen Herring, former Framingham Town Historian

Water Street as an ancient road was the South Path to Marlbury. When the Sudbury River flooded, travelers would come down Old Connecticut Path and cross the river here, where it was much safer. They would then proceed along the South Path to Marlboro. Today this path is Water Street. ❖

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