



The Neighborhood Newsletter

Volume 13, Number 1

The Spring Marches In Issue, March, 2006



THE BISHOP BUS AND OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

By Lynne Klosterman (*Lincoln Street*)

The Bus is Back in Town Again....

The School Committee notified us this past July that the bus service for our elementary students to Bishop School would be terminated in September. The original decision to eliminate the bus varied from budgetary and inequity issues to potential use of the bus for Special Ed students. The School Committee felt it was our responsibility to find a safe way to school for our children either by carpooling, walking, school buses, and/or private bus contracting.

Many of us were then perplexed, if not outraged by the timing of the decision and lack of input from the community. During last summer, many concerned parents attended the school committee meetings to further learn the circumstances for this decision. As a community we were able to reverse the bus decision and maintain our "free" bus temporarily for the 2005-06 school year; however, the bus would be terminated thereafter.

A strong sense of community continued to develop amongst the affected families and the neighborhood quickly organized our strategy for the best bus alternatives. Arlington Children's Center graciously offered space for meetings, a Yahoo group e-mail was estab-

lished for communication purposes, and many Bishop community members wrote letters to the *Advocate* voicing transportation concerns. We began dialogue of our Bishop bus talking points with School Committee members including: safe routes to school, the uniqueness of our district (only neighborhood in town without a neighborhood school), density of the area, increasing traffic congestion, fuel efficiency, cost of private busing (\$400/child), and the need for additional crossing guards at every major intersection.

For those who could not attend the meetings, it was suggested in lieu of the bus to spot redistrict and divide up our neighborhood; but the Superintendent felt this would not benefit our community until a town-wide redistricting plan was approved.

After every viable option was thoughtfully considered, the community felt that the bus would be the safest and most effective way to transport over 130 students to school daily. Our spokesperson, Doug Rosner (*Valley Road*), and other parents within the community met with the Superintendent and some members of the School Committee. The committee was concerned about the budget, and a cost-sharing approach for continued bus service was suggested. On February 6th, the committee approved the compromise providing for an affordable annual fee of \$180 per child with a cap of \$270 per family.

The bus is not an entitlement to our neighborhood; it was provided when the Parmenter School closed. As responsible parents, we are entitled to our children's safety and well-being and the bus will provide that level of comfort.

The upcoming elections will be a great opportunity to look at School Committee candidates who are willing to partner with the community, listen to our needs, and work together toward a solution over issues like our bus, crossing guards and safety, and town-wide redistricting, to name a few.

Editor's Note: *We're glad that a compromise was reached that will keep the school bus running. From our point of view, one added advantage of the school bus is that it allows parents to meet and chat at the bus stop every school day, and that's not a trivial thing....*

THANK YOU !
(WITH FOOTNOTES)



Here's a most sincere "thank you" to all those who sent in a contribution to the **Newsletter** following our last issue in the Fall. We wish we could make those words hop off the page and shake your hand personally. Yet we are bound by the two-dimensional nature of print; so for the moment these black-and-white sentiments will have to do, heartfelt as they genuinely are.

What's just as gratifying, though, is that so many of you care not just about the **Newsletter**, but also about a friendly and supportive neighborhood where all of us can live together. That's our vision, too; it's a vision, we think, that will sustain us in the future.

And now, two footnotes:

First, we'd also like to gently encourage those of you who have not yet made a **Newsletter** contribution. So if you haven't yet donated, or if we

haven't heard from you in a while, please step up to the plate in any amount that feels doable for you.

We hope you'll join the community of **Newsletter** supporters, who may not always be visible to each other, but who are nevertheless a very real and vital community of neighbors. Your checks should be made payable to the Menotomy Rocks Neighborhood Association and sent to Bill Berkowitz at 12 Pelham Terrace. Thank you, of course.

And second, looking ahead to our next issue – around June – is there an article, story, or news note you would like to see (or write about!), or an idea you'd like to have developed? Please think about it, and let us know. Dust off your keyboards, or sharpen your pens, and let your voice be heard. Truly. If there's anything such as citizen journalism, with a welcome mat out to everyone, we are it; and we want to stay that way.

Thank you once again – in all possible dimensions – and see you in the Spring!



MARTIAL ARTS IN MENOTOMY ROCKS

By David Kales (*Bartlett Avenue*)

I was sitting on my front porch on Bartlett Ave. I'd say it was about eleven years ago. It must have been June, because I was already worrying about how long it would be before the crabgrass would overrun my lawn.

But something else was troubling me. Maybe it was a mid-life crisis. As a freelance writer, I found myself in an endless cycle of when you're hustling to find business, you weren't writing; and when you're writing, you weren't out hustling for business.

Added to my professional doldrums was a physical ennui – my aches and pains

seemed to be growing, my body plumbing system was springing leaks, and all the malaise associated with aging was beginning to take a toll on my psyche. Working out on Nautilus machines and running on treadmills were boring.

But then, waking out of my reverie, I noticed a flyer lying on the porch advertising a martial arts school in Arlington – now called “Martial Arts for Health.” So, I went down to the school, which is located in Arlington Center, diagonally across the street from the Fire Station.

To my surprise, this wasn't a Gold's Gym, where you see muscular “twentyish” guys lifting weights, doing kick boxing, and looking just plain tough. Rather, there were men and women of all ages, ranging from their late 20s to their 50s, the end of the age spectrum where I stood. Thus began my training – not in just one of the martial arts, but in eight martial arts, ranging from Tai Chi to Kung Fu – each movement designed to develop a different part of your body. Taken together, the program offers a full-body workout, developing your health both internally and externally.

What are the benefits I've received from my martial arts training? I've increased my strength; improved flexibility, coordination, balance, and weight control; maintained cardiovascular health; and learned self-defense skill – and, at the very least, slowed the aging process. (To find out more about what the school offers, give Martial Arts for Health a call at [781] 646-8660.)

Today, I'm a second-degree black belt instructor at the school.

The other day, I was walking Max, my 14 ½-year-old golden retriever, in Menotomy Rocks Park and the idea hit me. Why not hold martial arts classes in the park? They could be for adults, children, or families. On a Saturday in spring or on a summer eve, Menotomy Rocks is the perfect setting for neighborhood training and socializing.

2006 might be your year to lose weight, increase flexibility and stamina, reduce stress – and get in better shape. So if anyone is interested in pursuing this idea, please e-mail me at dkales@comcast.net.



THE LEND A HAND SOCIETY

By Pegge Nicholl (*Stony Brook Road*)

Editor's Note: *Since we are fans of neighborhood history, we're very pleased to print this brief reminiscence here. Pegge is a (very) long-time neighbor and the last President of an impressive and largely neighborhood-based charitable organization.*

It's a different world today. What hasn't changed, though, is the need we all have for one another, and to get help – and give it – from time to time. If Lend a Hand is gone, what could take its place? How can we best lend a hand to each other in the neighborhood in 2006?

A historic piece of our neighborhood relates to the Arlington Lend A Hand Society, a charitable organization. It was founded during World War II as a chapter of Boston Lend a Hand Society, which itself is still in existence. Through its various fund-raising activities, it was able to contribute moneys to town agencies and service organizations.

At monthly meetings, its members enjoyed sharing new methods of fund-raising as well as the camaraderie of enthusiastic and concerned women. During the 1960s, 20 of the 22 members resided in our neighborhood. But due to the lack of new members, when women were pursuing careers or were otherwise involved, it disbanded in the mid-1970s.

As the last President of Lend a Hand, it was with some dolor that I turned over in its entirety records, photographs, and memorabilia to the Smith Museum. As an adjunct, there are but two of the members still residing in our neighborhood, Ruth Tee (*Devereaux Street*) and myself.

WANTED: VOLUNTEER BOOMERS

By Marianne Curren (*Hillsdale Road*)

The media has, of late, been fixated on “baby boomers,” focusing largely on their plans for work, retirement, and leisure – and the impact these plans may have on our culture. One emerging theme is the boomers’ anticipated commitment to community involvement. Here in town, the Council on Aging (COA), conveniently located at the Arlington Senior Center, is in a unique position to fill a range of needs, for both current clients and for neighbors and others looking to contribute in our own backyard.

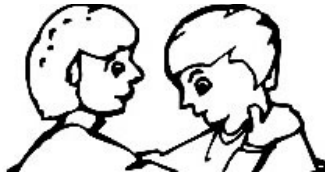
A municipal agency, the COA’s mission is to “provide advocacy and support services to help Arlington elders lead dignified and independent lives.” With some 9,000 Arlington residents age 60 or over, more than 20% of the Town’s population comes under the COA’s umbrella today. (These numbers will only increase as the local population ages.) Available COA services run the gamut of vital senior issues, and comprise four broad, basic areas: Information and Referral; Health and Wellness; Transportation; and Social Services.

While funded through state and local money, donations, and grants, the COA relies heavily on volunteers, who are critical to the success of many of the offerings. Each year COA volunteers donate more than 5,500 hours and an assortment of skills, from financial expertise to clerical support, from clinic assistance to membership on numerous boards and committees. Joyce Killingsworth of Hillsdale Road, who has worked with the Council in various roles, sums up her volunteering efforts: “I find it very rewarding to give back to the community, and to know that my personal contributions make a difference.”

Volunteers are always needed and warmly welcomed by the council, but a few specific programs could use an immediate infusion of energy. Could you be one of those energy infusers?

Friendly Visitors

The Arlington COA matches volunteers with homebound Arlington elders



(including elders in our neighborhood), who for many reasons lack other community support. A walk, a game of cards, a mail check – one hour of weekly companionship – can make a world of difference to someone in town. You provide a caring link and an informal source of information. In return, you benefit from a connection with one of Arlington’s appreciative seniors.

Medical Escort Services (MES)

In a different vein, MES is for those who love to drive as well as help. If you have a valid MA driver’s license, a clean driving record, and a desire to serve about once a week, you can transport clients to and from their medical appointments. Clients are aware that your commitment is strictly to drive – and they pay for any parking fees that may be involved.

Intergenerational Task Force (IGTF)

This task force creates and coordinates activities that join seniors and people of younger generations. Currently, the IGTF is looking to expand a program that supplies readers to some Arlington elementary schools. In addition, a book club of approximately 14 seniors and Arlington High School students brings a variety of experiences and perspectives to a monthly discussion at AHS. These projects and more are under further development, and could profit from more input and participation.

Major Community Outreach Effort

A significant initiative is in its incipient stages and will provide town-wide opportunities for individuals, groups, and organizations as it unfolds. The goal is ambitious: by the end of 2007, to have contacted every 60+ resident in Arlington with information concerning all programs at the Arlington Senior Center, along with their purposes. Naturally, this undertaking will require much effort and many talents as it unfolds.

Any neighbor with an interest in the quality of life for Arlington seniors – and, by extension, for all of us – should consider getting involved in the COA in some capacity. Boomers (who like it or not eventually become seniors), along with the generations behind them, can cooperate to create an environment in which all Arlington elders lead “dignified and independent lives.” And that could be a booming legacy.

For more information on volunteer opportunities, call Bill Murphy at the Arlington Council on Aging (located in the Senior Center on Maple Street), at (781) 316-3403.



CAN YOU TELL US A STORY?

Everyone loves a good story. And everyone has a story to tell. So we thought that in an upcoming issue of the **Newsletter**, we’d make room for some of your own stories about our neighborhood.

Chances are just about all of you remember a neighborhood experience or event that stands out for you, that illustrates what living in our neighborhood is all about. It would be excellent if you could share it with other readers, who we think would enjoy reading about it at least as much as us.

So in our next issue, we’re thinking about a more formal “call for stories,” perhaps in one page or less, with a few more instructions for writing them up and sending them in. We’d then print as many as we have room for in the fall.

Do you have any comments or suggestions for revising or improving this idea? Please let us know, by sending a note to Bill Berkowitz at Bill_Berkowitz@uml.edu, and we’ll take it from there.

ELECTION SPECIAL: YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD CANDIDATES

Town elections, just in case you weren't aware, are coming up on April 1. And three of our neighbors are running for town-wide office: Clarissa Rowe (Brantwood Road) for Selectman, and Sue Sheffler (an incumbent, from Kensington Park) and Alex Candelas (Irving Street) for School Committee. In both of these races, three town-wide candidates are competing; two of them will be elected. We invited all three to send an electoral message to you. They kindly obliged; their statements are printed below. While the **Newsletter** does not endorse individual candidates, we definitely do endorse getting involved in neighborhood and community affairs. We encourage everyone to vote on Saturday, April 1.

CLARISSA ROWE

Dear Neighbors and Friends:

My name is Clarissa Rowe, and I am writing to ask for your support for my campaign for Selectman of the Town of Arlington.

I have lived in Arlington with my family for nearly 30 years, and my family has lived on Brantwood Road for the past 19 years. I have represented Precinct 8 in Town Meeting for the past 14 years. My children, Jessica and Nicholas Batzell, took the bus to Bishop School where I was on the first School Council. Jess now coaches a young girls' soccer team.

I am a small business owner, and a professional landscape architect and planner. As many of you know, I was among the people who founded the Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park more than a decade ago. I have worked on many projects in the park, including the building of the playground, planting and building the wetlands in Hill's Pond, and getting rid of those pesky invasive weeds.

Why do I want to serve my Town as Selectman? I want to be an independent voice to:

- Figure out ways to keep the promises that have been made to rebuild our schools and our fire stations, redevelop Symmes, and protect the Mugar land, while holding down taxes;

- Be supportive of our libraries and their funding;

- Be creative about how to keep the town's largest cost – health care benefits for town workers – affordable, by talking and working collaboratively

with the town's labor organizations and soliciting their ideas for cost-cutting measures;

- Be supportive of Arlington businesses – especially small businesses – to foster the image of Arlington as an affordable and welcoming town for entrepreneurs;

- Promote balanced development to preserve the community character of our town. My friend, Carol Kowalski, and I started the Arlington Land Trust together five years ago so that our voice would be heard in development discussions;

- Protect our natural resources and open spaces by changing priorities in the Town structure to improve their care and maintenance. I want to foster more public-private partnerships of park groups, land protection advocates, and sports organizations to keep our open spaces safe and sustainable;

- And lastly, I want to help lead public discourse in a civil, respectful manner.

If you have time and would like to help out in the campaign, please go to our website, www.ClarissaRowe.org, or call me (643-3156). The voters of Precinct 8 and 10 and 12 are the ones that determine elections in Arlington. Please come out to vote on April 1st. I need your support.

**Many thanks,
Clarissa Rowe**



SUE SHEFFLER

Hi Neighbors:

When I last wrote you via the **Neighborhood Newsletter**, we were in the process of passing an override, hiring a new School Superintendent, and incorporating two new members onto the School Committee (Susan Lovelace and Sean Garballey).

The override allowed us to keep most school programs in place. It does NOT allow us to keep up with inflation, especially in employee health care (projected to rise about 13%) and in energy costs (projected to double next year).

Meanwhile, we promised the taxpayers that operating expenses would be capped at a 4% increase annually (over five years), and benefit costs at 7% annually. This allows Arlington to rebuild its fiscal reserves, and to plan for some spending stability over five years. I am committed to keeping this promise, and to keep communicating about the sacrifices it requires from all residents.

I am also committed to continuing the quest for OTHER sources of school revenue: for example, the current legislative effort to provide state aid to Arlington at least at the 2002 level. There are also a number of initiatives coming out of the budget subcommittee, which I chair, that would use educational enrichment opportunities to also serve as funding sources for the schools (for example, we may accept overseas students on a tuition basis where space allows).

Meanwhile, the new administration

and School Committee have a primary joint goal of *moving the Arlington school system from “good” to “great,”* a goal that is within reach of our community. This absolutely requires putting the educational and other needs of school-children **first**, while balancing the needs of taxpayers. That is no easy task.

Among the challenges of the last year:

- Student travel safety: I initiated and now co-chair a task force with Police Chief Ryan on student travel to and from school. We are working collaboratively with principals, safety officers, the DPW, the Traffic Advisory Committee, and parents to make major improvements in areas such as (1) designated and monitored walking routes to each school, with improved crosswalk visibility; (2) designated and monitored drop-off spots at schools to reduce congestion and improve safety; and (3) snow clearance as needed by schools.

- The successful revamping of the Special Education program, as required after a review by the Department of Education.

- Adding fees to cover the majority of costs for all non-mandated services provided by the schools, rather than increasing class size or asking teachers to accept inadequate raises.

- I also serve as chair of the Redistricting Advisory Group, which has been a painful but very enlightening experience. We do need to redistrict, without question; but it will take more staff resources and parental communication than I could ever have believed. I plan to take on this challenge with renewed energy in my next term.

I look forward to continuing to serve the Arlington community to the best of my ability, and thank you for your thoughtful consideration of candidates in our next election, on April 1.

**Best regards,
Sue Sheffler**



ALEX CANDELAS

Dear Neighbors,

“All who have meditated on the art of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of nations depends on the education of youth.”
Aristotle

I am Alex Candelas. I live at 108 Irving Street with my husband Gustavo and my 11-year-old twins, Gustavo and Pelagia, who attend Ottoson Middle School. I am a candidate for School Committee.

Educating our children is an obligation of the community and the means to a quality life. As a lifelong resident of Arlington, the eldest child of working-class Greek immigrant parents with limited resources and minimal education, Arlington schools provided the foundation that has made me a lifelong learner. I firmly stand for quality and excellence in education. All Arlington students deserve an opportunity to achieve academic success, so they can fulfill their hopes and dreams. We need to address the academic needs of all students and engage them in the manner that they best learn. If we are mindful of this, then we will be “creating students who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done – students who are creative, inventive, and discoverers.” (*Jean Piaget*)

Excellence in education relies on the support of the community. By creating a forum where we listen to members of the community, parents, teachers, principals, and students before we initiate or enact policy, we build a stronger and more unified community in support of the highest educational standards. Quality education is our most precious right and we must, as a community, protect and nurture it.

I am running for School Committee because I believe the Committee can do a better job of fulfilling their obligation to seek community input on decisions and policies that have a direct impact on education, student safety, and budgetary matters. The recent controversy over the bus is an example of how important it is for members of the School Committee to listen to the community before making de-

isions or cutting important services. In that case, the safety of the children should have been the guiding principle. The resulting feeling of betrayal among an entire community and months of debate distracted the Committee from other important work and resulted in a loss of significant political capital for a cause that had little or no material impact on the budget.

As a School Committee member, I intend to keep the focus on improving education while also recognizing that Arlington residents share common yet unique needs where creative solutions only arise from cooperation and collaboration. I will emphasize areas such as curriculum, methods of teaching, student/teacher ratios, and improving education for all children at all levels, notwithstanding recurring budgetary constraints. I will do my homework, communicate my ideals, policy initiatives, and solutions to you, the voters, listen to your input, and make appropriate changes before pursuing their passage. I understand that involving the community in material policy decisions will require a greater effort, but that is what you should expect from your School Committee.

Growing up in Arlington and now raising my children here, I have always taken pride in seeing our Town’s commitment to issues of education. I hope you share that commitment and I respectfully ask for your support.

**Sincerely,
Alex Candelas**



**Cast Your Vote on Saturday,
April 1st.**

The Neighborhood Newsletter is produced through generous contributions from neighbors and the underwriting support of Judy Weinberg of Venner Road and RE/MAX Leading Edge Real Estate, judyweinberg@comcast.net.

HEY, KIDS

By Claire Raizen (*Bishop School student*)

This new section of **The Neighborhood Newsletter** is completely dedicated to kids: your art, your ideas, and your articles.

Just for fun, in every issue, there will be a maze or word search in this section, along with the subject of an art competition that will be judged by kids. For our next issue, draw or paint what you think the neighborhood will look like in 500 years.

The **Newsletter** wants you to write too! How about an article about a kid in the neighborhood who's done something great? Feel free to contribute to the **Newsletter** as much as possible. Send your artwork, articles, and ideas to **The Neighborhood Newsletter**, 135 Jason St, or e-mail to jhitesnews@comcast.net.

WORD SEARCH

By Claire Raizen

Find the music-related words in the grid. Words go up and down, left and right, and sideways. See the solution on page eight.

Claire Raizen, a Norfolk Road resident, is a fifth-grade student at the Waldorf School.

Y	I	V	H	U	T	Z	N	E	Q	R	R	X	B	S
C	T	G	L	S	S	I	N	U	X	N	Y	F	B	I
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M	U	D	Z	M	G	U	I	T	A	R	U	R	Z	S
H	O	C	B	P	Y	B	I	Y	F	T	X	R	K	A
O	X	O	K	G	Y	X	Y	K	Q	U	Q	K	T	B
R	N	Z	Q	W	Y	D	G	B	R	L	G	Q	Q	A
E	P	S	B	P	I	K	T	O	P	D	C	D	G	P
W	R	G	V	T	Q	T	M	N	H	C	N	F	C	J

BASS	SAXOPHONE
CELLO	TROMBONE
DRUMS	TRUMPET
FLUTE	VIOLA
GUITAR	VIOLIN



CALLING ALL NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS

Kids, this one's for you.

There are lots of advantages to being a young person in the neighborhood - if you haven't figured that out already. One big advantage is that neighbors want you, and need you, to help them out with all kinds of tasks around their house and yard. Why? Because neighbors are busy, and tasks pile up (ask your mom and dad); so they need some kid power in their lives.

Okay, what's in it for you? Some work experience, to begin with; plus the chance to help one of your neighbors; but also a little extra cash in your pocket to spend on things you want, and that can never hurt.

So if this interests you - parents, please take note - here's what to do:

Send an e-mail to us at jhitesnews@comcast.net. Let us know you are available to help out. Tell us about the special things you're good at doing, or would like to do. (For example, things like leaf raking in the fall, or shoveling sidewalks in the winter, or child care, or caring for pets, or whatever else it may be.) Tell us too how old you are and where we can reach you.

We'll keep a list of young people who are interested. Then, if a neighbor contacts us looking for help, and if you can do what they are looking for, we'll let them know about you; after that, they may give you a call. We'll make your name available only to neighbors, and only for neighborhood youth-type tasks as well.

Sound like a plan? Let us know what you think, and let us hear from you.

One thing's for sure: If we all help each other across the generations, our neighborhood will be an even better place to live. Thanks!



A RAMBLING SPIRIT FILLS THIS LOCAL BOOK GROUP

By Betsy Lawson

This spring, the local Rambling Readers book group celebrates ten years together discussing literature from around the globe ... or around the corner. Rebecca Gruber of Pleasant Street held the first organizational meeting in February 1996, with attendees culled from a list of people who had indicated interest in a book group at one of the Picnics in the Park at Menotomy Rocks.

Currently the group has 12 active members, one member on “sabbatical,” and two emeritae: once a Rambler, always a Rambler. All have ties to the Pleasant Street area, either through residence or affinity.

The first selection, set in Ireland, was “House of Spendid Isolation” by Edna O’Brien. Since then, the group has rambled to Afghanistan, Tuscany, Madrid, London, Peru, and the Belgian Congo, to name but a few of their literary destinations.

Like the exotic locales of the books themselves, the meeting locations rotate among the members’ houses. Refreshments served usually echo the culinary delights – or oddities – described in the pages read that month. At the January meeting, for example, Italian sundries were served in keeping with the richness of Italian peasant culture described in “A Kiss from Maddalena,” written by Arlington resident Christopher Castellani. Chris attended the meeting and shared with the group his inspiration for writing a love story set with the backdrop of World War II.

Chris is in good company with other local writers to share with the Rambling Readers. Pat Thomas, for-

merly of Mt. Vernon Street, discussed her non-fiction book “Hot Shot” which chronicles the race for an HIV/AIDS vaccine. Myra McLarey shared about “Water from the Well,” a magical tale set in Arkansas.

Since its inception, the group has read more than 100 books, but has a “suggested” reading list of more than 600+ titles ... enough to keep the readers, and friends, together for another decade or more.

Betsy is a former resident of Pleasant Street.

WHAT’S COOKING IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

By Colin Campbell
(Morton Road)



In future issues, I would like to begin a “Neighborhood Recipes” column where I would showcase one or two recipes from our neighbors. The recipes that would be published would be selected on several criteria, including uniqueness of recipe, anticipated popularity, and connections to the Jason Heights area. I would particularly like recipes with this “connection,” which could be that you brought this food to a neighborhood picnic, enjoyed it with your neighbors, or invented it yourself! (Please test any recipes that you “invent” yourself!). In the future, we might even incorporate these recipes into a fundraising cookbook.

E-mail your contributions to me at Colincampbell1@comcast.net. Please include a brief story if the recipe is neighborhood-related.

WE’VE GOT MAIL. . .



Dear Neighbors,

Arlington’s next town elections are scheduled for Saturday, April 1st, and our friend and neighbor Clarissa Rowe is running for one of two seats up for election on the Board of Selectmen.

Clarissa has been active in our community since she came to Arlington almost 30 years ago. She was active as a parent in the public schools, and over the years has led the rebuild of several playgrounds including the one in Menotomy Rocks Park. Fourteen years ago, she became a Town Meeting member representing Precinct 8.

A professional landscape architect and planner, Clarissa is the founder of the Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park and the Arlington Land Trust. She is a strong advocate for our neighborhood park and for balanced development in Arlington. Clarissa started the Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park in 1993 with other neighbors concerned about the need for citizens to partner with the town to maintain the park. She has continued to be active in park, playground, and open space protection and care around Arlington, and in leadership posts in state environmental organizations.

Also on the ballot this April are elections for school committee, housing authority and a ballot question to allow package stores in Arlington.

Don’t forget to vote on April 1st.

Cindy Friedman,
Jason Street

SEND US YOUR NEWS

We depend on you to let us know about families moving in, babies being born, couples getting married, or any other good news that we might share. We’re also interested in your opinions about neighborhood-related events and issues.

You can e-mail notes, announcements, letters, and even pictures to jhitesnews@comcast.net or write to **The Neighborhood Newsletter**, 135 Jason Street. We’ll look forward to hearing from you.

NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING NEWS



By Judy Weinberg (*Venner Road*)

How is the real estate market these days? Well, contrary to the sensationalism of the news reports, the sky is not falling and the bubble has not burst. Perhaps it's the relatively mild winter we've been having, lulling us into feeling it's spring. Or perhaps it's the fact that mortgage interest rates have not skyrocketed. (They're still at record lows, in the low 6% range.)

Or it just could be that people continue to have housing needs: downsizing when the kids have moved on, expanding as families grow, people moving in or out of the area, or renters becoming homeowners. Whatever the reasons, Arlington – and particularly our neighborhood – has continued to have healthy real estate activity. The last few months of 2005 were lackluster, but 2006 so far is showing signs of a robust market.

A market that has changed considerably over time is multi-family house sales. For many years, multi-family homes were purchased for the rental income, with the owner typically living in one of the units. When the condo market started growing, people (frequently developers) would buy multi-family homes, convert the apartments into condos, and make a handsome profit in a short amount of time. Besides the physical rehabbing of the property, the process to convert to condos requires only the services of an attorney, to draw up the necessary legal documents.

During the heyday of this condo conversion activity, it was difficult to purchase a multi-family home, as it would go under agreement almost as soon as it became available for sale. There were typically less than five properties available for sale at any given time.

Because of the plethora of these conversions, there is a glut of condos. In Arlington now, there are currently 18 multi-family houses for sale, and the average length of time these have been for sale is over 2 months. Of the 92 condos currently for sale, 60 are in multi-family conversions, and the average time on market for these is 49 days. A condo in a multi-family home is still a good investment, and a relatively affordable way to enter the housing market. However, new condo conversions have slowed considerably due to market saturation.

Real Estate in our Neighborhood

As our neighborhood is so densely populated, it is rare to see new construction. The home at 36 Brunswick Road sold recently; the developer left the original house, and is erecting a new home on the adjacent lot where there had been a swimming pool. Town zoning requires a lot have a minimum of 6,000 square feet, and 60 feet of frontage to be considered buildable.

Following is a list of the sales in our **Newsletter** neighborhood from July 2, 2005 through February 22, 2006. These are broker-assisted sales, and do not show for-sale-by-owner transactions:

Single-Family Homes

26	Academy Street	\$750,000
42	Bonad Road	\$419,000
36	Brunswick Road	\$887,000
93	Churchill Avenue	\$635,000
47	Lockeland Avenue	\$633,500
47	Ottawa Road	\$515,000
205	Pleasant Street	\$594,500
248	Pleasant Street	\$565,000
11	Pleasant View Road	\$595,000
109	Spring Street	\$436,000
110	Wildwood Avenue	\$511,000

Condos

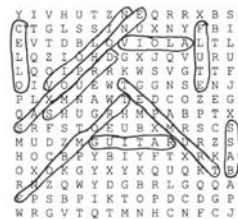
7	Bartlett Avenue	\$341,040
9	Bartlett Avenue	\$242,000
77	Bartlett Avenue	\$452,500
15	Field Road	\$415,000
34	Jason Street	\$375,000
114	Pleasant Street	\$254,000
135	Pleasant Street	\$575,000
152A	Pleasant Street	\$759,000
15	Plymouth Street	\$519,000

Multi-Families

21	Oak Knoll	\$750,000
22	Pleasant Street	\$700,000
28	Wildwood Avenue	\$700,000

Our neighbor Judy is a real estate broker at RE/MAX Leading Edge in Arlington, and can be reached there at judyweinberg@remax.net.

Solution



CONTACT THE NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER

We always welcome your letters, articles, or suggestions, as well as any donations you might be able to make. To contact Mary Cummings, Editor:

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To make a contribution to **The Neighborhood Newsletter**: Make checks payable to "Menotomy Rocks Neighborhood Association" and send to Bill Berkowitz at 12 Pelham Terrace. Thank you for your support!