

Pawtuxet River Rag Spring 2019

The newsletter of [Friends of the Pawtuxet](#) and the [West Bay Land Trust](#)

PAWTUXET RIVER EARTH DAY CLEAN-UP: SATURDAY APRIL 20

Join us from 9:30 am to noon for a clean-up along the Pawtuxet River. Meet at the RI DEM Pawtuxet Supply Depot at 230 Warwick Ave., Cranston (across from Stop & Shop). Please bring gloves, but we'll supply other materials. This event is suitable for adults and supervised kids. Feel free to drop by for any amount of time. 2019 marks the 28th year of the clean-up! Rain date April 27.

CLEAN-UP ON THE CRANSTON BIKE PATH: SATURDAY APRIL 27

Sponsored by Ward 3 Councilor John Donegan. Meet at 9:30 at the intersection of Carolina Avenue (the entrance road to Lowe's that begins at Cranston Street) and the bike path, in the former Kmart parking lot. Bring gloves. Will wrap-up at noon.

FREE TREES TO GOOD HOMES!



Cranston's tree planting program has red oak and tulip trees available to plant in front yards this spring. The trees are free, 5-10 feet tall and installed by a nursery. This year the city-financed program expects to plant its 200th tree. The non-profit Rhode Island Tree Council administers the program, which is returning for its fifth year in 2019. To apply, contact the RI Tree Council by phone 764-5885 or through its website at ritree.org.

COMMUNITY GARDEN

Cranston's only community garden, the Edgewood Community Garden at Cherry Woods, is located behind Edgewood Highland Elementary School on Pawtuxet Avenue. The garden is run by the West Bay Land Trust and the cost for a 4 X 16-foot plot is \$25. New gardeners are welcome, but spots go quickly. Contact Lisa Gibb at lisagibb2@verizon.net for more information.

CUMBERLAND FARMS DEFEAT

In April 2018 the proposed Cumberland Farms gas station on the NW corner of Park and Warwick Avenues was quashed when the Republican controlled council, which had initially backed the project, withdrew its support. Intense lobbying by area residents, the Edgewood Preservation Society and the group "Edgewood Doesn't Want Cumberland Farms" were key in scuttling the proposal. A similar Cumberland Farms project had been advanced in 2015 and was rejected. Following the withdrawal of the most recent proposal, the Council passed an ordinance sponsored by then Ward 1 Councilor Steve Stycos specifying that no new gas stations can be built anywhere in Cranston within 300 feet of a residence. This should prevent similar proposals in the future.

Did you know that the Pawtuxet River's 12.3 miles take in five municipalities (Coventry, Cranston, Scituate, Warwick and West Warwick)?

PAWTUXET VILLAGE FARMERS MARKET

The market opens May 4. Vendors include The Local Catch (fresh fish), Weatherlow Farms (pastured meats), Baffoni's Poultry, plus fruits and vegetables from Pak Express, Blue Skys Farm, gC Farms, and Barden Family Orchard. Other edibles include bread from Olga's Cup + Saucer, bagels and pizza from Little Falls Cafe, honey from Fruit Hill Apiaries, nuts from the Virginia & Spanish Peanut Company and Bolt Coffee.

GREEN CALENDAR

Saturday April 20 (9:30 -noon). Pawtuxet River Earth-Day Clean-up (see details at top of newsletter).

Saturday April 27 (9:30 – noon). Clean-up on the Cranston Bike Path (see details at top of newsletter).

Saturday April 27 (9:30 am – 11:30 am). Edgewood Waterfront Preservation Association/Pawtuxet Village Association Stillhouse Cove Cleanup. The clean-up will also include Pawtuxet Park and comprise ditch work, trash and invasive plant removal, garden work with the Edgewood Garden Club, and maintenance activities including storm-drain clearing and sidewalk sweeping. All ages are welcome (parental supervision for children required). All supplies will be provided including water, gloves, trash bags, bug spray, sunscreen, and tools.

Please wear appropriate foot wear - no flip-flops. Rain date is April 28 10 am to noon. <http://www.stillhousecove.org/>

Saturday May 4 (9 am - noon): Pawtuxet Village Farmers Market Opens. The market is open every Saturday until late October and is located in the Rhodes on the Pawtuxet parking lot, Rhodes Place, Cranston. More info on the Facebook page and <http://pawtuxetmarket.com>.

Saturday May 18: Pawtuxet River Plant Walk. Naturalist Sandy Jacobi will lead a plant walk along the Pawtuxet River trail. (Hopefully, Mayapples will be in bloom!) Meet at the market table at the Farmers Market at 10 am.

Sunday May 19 6:30 pm: Horseshoe Crab Walk. Save The Bay Restoration Coordinator Wenley Ferguson will lead a walk in Stillhouse Cove to explain the annual horseshoe crab mating ritual. Meet at southern end of Stillhouse Cove (corner of Ocean Avenue and Narragansett Boulevard) at 6:30 pm. Rain date is Monday May 20 at 7 pm.

Saturday June 1: Pawtuxet River Plant Identification Walk. Kate Aubin and Steve Stycos will lead a plant ID walk along the Pawtuxet starting from the lower Rhodes on the Pawtuxet parking lot at 10 am. This walk is for all ages, especially children and teens. Plant identification cards and books will be provided, and participants will search for easily identifiable plants in the area.

Saturday June 8: Farmer's Market moves to William Hall Library parking lot, 1825 Broad Street, due to the Gaspee Day Parade. If you drive, avoid Park Avenue and Pawtuxet Village. Farmers appreciate Gaspee Day customers because attendance is lower than usual.

Friday June 14: Firefly walk at 8:45 PM, meet at the lower Rhodes on the Pawtuxet parking lot. A half-hour walk to see the firefly mating ritual. Bug repellent, long sleeves and long pants recommended. Please do not bring jars, nets, dogs or noisy electronics.

Saturday August 24: RI Wild Plant Society Plant Sale.

Friday September 20: International Coastal Clean-Up Day. Check [Save the Bay's](#) site for local clean-ups.

Saturday October 26: Last Farmers Market for 2019.

PLASTIC BAG BAN

Cranston City Council voted 6-1 in March to ban single-use plastic bags at retail checkout in the city effective July 1, 2020. The ordinance received the support of two-thirds of the nine-member council (there was one vote against, one abstention, and one member was out of town). There has been strong public support for the ban and public comment heavily favored enacting the ban. Mayor Allan Fung subsequently vetoed the measure, which will go back to City Council (six out of nine votes are needed to overcome the mayoral veto).

ROGER WILLIAMS PARK CONSERVANCY

The [Roger Williams Park Conservancy](#) serves as a steward for the long-term sustainability of Roger Williams Park and its enjoyment by the community. Created in 2016 by the Rhode Island Foundation, the Conservancy works with the City of Providence Parks Department to offer community programs, raise resources, coordinate marketing efforts, and plan for the long-term sustainability of the Park and its enjoyment by the community. The Conservancy holds occasional public meetings at 6:30 pm at sites in the Park (Dalrymple Boathouse, Betsey Williams Cottage, Museum of Natural History, Botanical Center).

Did you know that the RI Department of Environmental Management sponsors the “[RI Great Outdoors Pursuit](#)”? The free program connects children and families with nature and the outdoors including beaches, parks and recreation areas statewide. Each child receives a “passport” and can accrue points and rewards for participating. Over 170 families took part in 2018.

CRANSTON SOLAR FACILITY UPDATE

Cranston’s latest “live” solar facility is the 67-acre 53,000-panel “Gold Meadow Farm” off Lippitt Avenue which is complete save for the interconnection line. Developer Southern Sky and National Grid had tried to remove 243 street trees as part of the power line upgrade; however, WBLT was able to save 90 of them on Laten Knight Road, arguing that National Grid needed to go underground in this area so as not to violate the city’s comprehensive plan, which includes retaining the rural character of the [Historic Farm Route Loop](#).

A 46-acre facility on Hope Road is under construction and features extensive chain-link fence and razor wire, contravening plans that had been agreed upon with the city. (At the March 25, 2019 City Council meeting, Cranston Planning Director Jason Pezzulo promised to again

address the fencing issue with developers). Already operational is a facility off Seven Mile Road (where there are plans to add another installation). Moreover, a 30-acre project is planned for a site near Natick Avenue.

Many Cranston residents, even those living in parts of the city directly affected by the solar installations, have been unaware of the scale of these projects and how disruptive they are to local ecosystems. Count WBLT member Doug Doe among those who stood up loudly, and early, in opposing the bulldozing of swaths of forested land.

Permission to build solar farms in western Cranston was recommended by Mayor Fung and passed the City Council by a 5-3 vote in November 2015. Council also passed initial performance standards in 2015 following the first Hope Farm Solar application. These were to provide a modicum of guidance until a full plan had been vetted. The standards, drafted by the WBLT and Councilor Steve Stycos, set tough noise standards and require solar companies to post a bond to pay for removal of the solar facility at the end of its 30-year lifespan. The standards also prohibit removal of top soil from the site, allowing it to be disturbed only to the extent necessary to build the project. The developers have not abided by these modest requirements or DEM mandates at the Lippitt Ave. site.

City Council and Mayor Allen Fung finally enacted a nine-month moratorium on commercial solar projects in February 2019. This moratorium is being challenged by developers who are intent on installing a solar factory in the Fiskeville area in southwestern Cranston. The *Cranston Herald* stories on January 9, 2019 "[Proposed moratorium too late to stop some solar farms](#)" and March 27, 2019 "[Solar freeze weathers initial challenge](#)," discuss the moratorium. A January 19, 2019 article in the *Providence Journal*, "[Cranston's half-dozen solar projects spark heated debate](#)," provides a summary of the various developments, as does a January 7, 2019 article in *ecoRI News*, "[Solar Projects Continue to Throw Shade at Green Space](#)."

All of these projects have resulted in, or will require, the felling of thousands of trees, and produce further damage from grading the sites, disrupting wetlands, removing tons of topsoil, and installing fences, all of which have a deleterious effect on wildlife. The clearcutting of trees, installation of panels and other infrastructure, and topographical alterations also affect drainage, increasing the likelihood of flooding. Finally, there is the aesthetic aspect as Western Cranston's substantial wooded and farm acreage is replaced by an industrial use.

The WBLT and Cranston Conservation Commission are advocating for a comprehensive solar and renewable energy ordinance that will allow for development of non-fossil fuel energy in the city, while at the same time preserving agricultural land, green spaces, and woodlands. Without a clear and cogent alternative energy policy, there is little guidance for appropriately locating these facilities. The State of Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources has compiled a [Solar Siting Guidance Information](#) that addresses some of these issues.

The WBLT is calling on citizens, especially those in western Cranston, to be vigilant regarding such developments. It is important to attend City of Cranston meetings, and ask questions regarding energy project siting proposals, and the compliance of developers with the regulations currently in place. Moreover, the long-term solution is an ordinance which will provide guidelines for siting large-scale solar projects.

BASF CLEAN-UP CONTINUES

BASF has largely completed its clean-up of the site of the former Ciba-Geigy manufacturing plant on the east side of Mill Street. This summer they will be conducting a clean-up of the property on the west side of Mill Street. City-wide Councilor Steve Stycos met with BASF staff and they agreed to hold a public meeting prior to the start of the clean-up. The future use of the BASF properties has not been determined. The company is trying to sell the land on both sides of the railroad tracks, west of Mill Street. It is not trying to sell the wooded parcel of land around Bellefont Pond. Steve is talking with the company about preserving the land as open space with public access.

DONATIONS

____ Yes, I'd like to help. My contribution to Friends of the Pawtuxet is enclosed.

____ Yes, I'd like to purchase a tree to be planted on public land in the memory of _____. Enclosed is \$150. Please make check payable to the West Bay Land Trust, and attach a brief description of the person for inclusion in a future newsletter.

Name _____ Email _____

Address _____

Please mail this form & your contribution to Friends of the Pawtuxet, 37 Ferncrest Ave., Cranston, RI 02905. Contributions to the WBLT and to Friends of the Pawtuxet are tax deductible.