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Lexington Minuteman.

April 14 - 20, 2011

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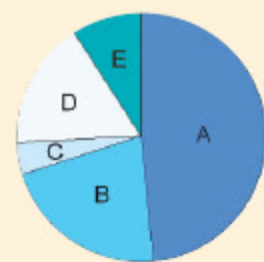


IT'S TIME TO PLAY BALL!

Share photos of your kids and grandkids in action in their Little League. Send your photos and caption information to wickedlocalphoto@gmail.com.

ONLINE POLL

What is your favorite Patriots' Day tradition?



A) Battle reenactment — 47%
B) Pancake breakfasts — 21%
C) Ceremonies on the Green — 4%
D) Parades — 16%
E) Other — 9%
Respondents: 42

This week's question:
Does Lexington need more night life?
Vote @ WickedLocalLexington.com

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HANSCOM FIELD



Pickers protest airport expansion outside the Civil Air Terminal at Hanscom Field in Bedford on Wednesday, April 6. Pictured, from left: Susan Frommer of Concord, Margaret Coppe of Lexington, Sarah Goos of Concord, Barbara Buchan of Lincoln, Jamie Diamond of Concord, Jim Poage of Lexington, Ashley Grant of Concord, Anne Frymer of Lexington, and Michael Henchman of Concord. PHOTO BY JIM CUNNINGHAM

Preservationists push for federal intervention

By Ben Aaronson
ben.aaronson@wickedlocal.com

Amid the noise and fury of the modern world, Minute Man National Historical Park stands as a historical sanctuary. Each year, more than a million people visit the park, which spans parts of Lexington, Lincoln and Concord, to walk in the footsteps of their forefathers and be transported back to 1775 and the days leading to the birth of a nation.

The authenticity of that 18th-century experience, however, is often interrupted by an intruder from 21st-century life. The drone of planes flying overhead is a familiar but not welcome sound to many park sup-

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72,290 Nashua Municipal Airport, Nashua, N.H.
68,001 Manchester-Boston Regional Airport, Manchester, N.H.
59,710 Portland International Jetport, Portland, Maine
44,179 Worcester Regional Airport, Worcester
SOURCE: AIR TRAFFIC ACTIVITY SYSTEM

Residents protest new air service, Page 31

porters and those who live in the communities near Hanscom Field in Bedford. "This is a very sensitive situation where aviation noise, traffic and pollution are antithetical to the mis-

sion of the park," said Anna West Winter, executive director of Save Our Heritage, a Concord-based advocacy group. "We're just not thinking about what it means to preserve a soundscape." In addition to the national park, Winter noted, the

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TOWN MEETING

Over and out

Session ends with debate over Estabrook site access

By Michael Phillis
mphillis@wickedlocal.com

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Annual Town Meeting came to a close after an extended period of relative chaos on a surprise point of reconsideration in the seventh and final session Monday night.

Precinct 2 Town Meeting member Michael McGuirk asked for reconsideration of Article 13b part 2. Originally approved on Monday, April 4, the article appropriated \$100,000 in design funds related to the potential widening of Robinson Road for use as an access road during the future construction of a new Estabrook School on Grove Street. Residents at the April 4 meeting raised concerns about increased traffic and the possibility that some of their property could be taken to accommodate the wider street.

On April 11, McGuirk proposed an amendment to remove specific references to Robinson Road and increase the appropriation to \$200,000.

"It appears to me ... there may be alternative approaches that might involve negotiation with few land owners, much lower legal costs, much lower paving costs and so on," he said.

McGuirk suggested placing a second access on Grove Street would negatively impact fewer residents.

"There is a single property ... that has a driveway on the entrance and has some undeveloped land behind it, and could potentially be taken as opposed to [land] being taken from many people on Robinson Street," he

said.

The properties at 119 and 121 Grove St. would be most affected by McGuirk's proposal. Asked about the possibility of the road coming through the property, Don Long, the father of the property owner, said, "As far as I'm concerned, no."

Raising objections

When the original article was passed, several abutters raised concerns that they had only recently been consulted about the possible changes. The citizen gallery was pretty much empty on Monday as McGuirk's 11th-hour proposal came as a surprise to many. Even some of the boards and committees that were asked to give an opinion on the article were not aware of the motion until that evening.

Precinct 6 Town Meeting member Dawn McKenna asked if the neighbors had been notified. McGuirk said they had not.

"I'm extremely concerned that this is coming forward without any notice to the folks on Grove Street," said Charles Hornig, a Precinct 8 Town Meeting member and a member of the Planning Board. "I haven't heard about how the people on Grove Street feel. I haven't heard a word about it because we are not going to consult them."

Town Meeting members also argued there was

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WORLD FOUNDATION FOR ASIA

Couple lays foundation for change in Cambodia

By Michael Phillis
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Victoria Ngo-Phat was 10 when she left Cambodia with some of her family as the Khmer Rouge took power in the Southeast Asian country. She never heard from those who were left behind. "Most of my family got out of Cambodia. I lost a few uncles. My maternal grandpa got stuck there and my great-grandparents got stuck there," said Ngo-Phat, a Lexington resident. "Whoever stayed there got killed."

Between 1975 and 1979, Cambodian dictator Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime carried out the killing of 21 percent of the country's population, about 1.7 million people, according to Yale University's

If you go

WHAT WFA fundraiser
WHEN Sunday, April 17, noon-5 p.m.
WHERE Pailin Restaurant, 6 Branch St., Lowell
COST \$30/adult, \$12/children
INFO 978-654-5237, wfasia.org

Cambodian Genocide Program

Ngo-Phat and her husband Darith Phat escaped the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge because they were able to leave Cambodia immediately. Now the Lexington couple works to create a better life for the children of their native land through the



Standing in their Lexington home, Darith Phat and Victoria Ngo-Phat are surrounded by artifacts and paintings from their homeland of Cambodia. WICKED LOCAL PHOTO BY RYAN MCBRIDE

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FROM THE FRONT

QUESTIONS? Contact Editor Ben Aaronson at ben.aaronson@wickedlocal.com or 781-674-7725.

HANSCOM

From Page 1

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For decades, Save Our Heritage and other local groups have worked to preserve the park and nearby natural and historical resources from adverse impacts of aviation activities at Hanscom Field. “We’ve been going at this for more than a decade and are still trying to get through the maze to the answer,” Winter said. “Preservation has been stymied each step of the way.”

But Winter and other preservationists have found renewed optimism of late. This past October, Save Our Heritage reached out to the Obama Administration, asking the president to reconvene a Federal Interagency Working Group established by President Bill Clinton in 2001.

“We hope they’re going to draw a line in the sand and say that this airport cannot be any larger because of where it is,” she said.

Federal intervention

According to a 2001 memorandum of understanding between the U.S. Department of Transportation, the U.S. Department of the Interior and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Hanscom-Minute Man National Historical Park Working Group was created to preserve the national park and other resources around Hanscom Field while allowing for appropriate transportation plan-

ning and economic development in the region.

Winter said local groups were very excited at first about the working group’s potential. But the process did not lead to concrete actions and fell by the wayside under the Bush Administration.

“It didn’t do much to keep further expansion at bay,” she said, as Hanscom Field has since become the second busiest airport in New England in terms of total operations over the past year, according to the Air Traffic Activity System. Relations with the Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport), the quasi-public agency that operates Hanscom, have often been more contentious than collaborative.

On Oct. 21, 2010, a group of noted historians and preservationists on Save Our Heritage’s advisory board joined Winter in drafting a letter to President Barack Obama, asking that the working group be reconvened. Signatories included historian and author David McCullough, documentary filmmaker Ken Burns, historian and author Doris Kearns Goodwin, historian and author Douglas Brinkley, naturalist Edward O. Wilson, and musician Don Henley, founder of the Walden Woods Project in Concord and Lincoln.

Their effort has inspired letters of support from the State House and Congressional delegations, as well as House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi. Rep. Niki Tsongas, D-5th, who serves on the Natural Resources Committee and the National Park Subcommittee, has become an outspoken advocate for the working group’s revival.

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those resources are so important to our national heritage and to the tourist economy of Massachusetts. Historic resources, once lost, are very hard to replace,” Tsongas said. “We need to find a more regular way to address concerns, knowing that economic development is important, too.”

Tsongas said she has had productive discussions with National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis about moving the process forward. Conversations with the FAA and other stakeholders are yet to come, she said.

According to Massport spokesman Richard Walsh, the agency was not a party to the working group when it was formed “so we do not have anything specific to add at this juncture.”

Walsh said Massport does work collaboratively with the national park, pointing to recent efforts to reduce training flights over the park. Massport also meet regularly with the Hanscom Field Advisory Commission and Hanscom Area Towns Committee, he said.

Reasons for optimism

Winter said she believes the working group could be successful where it failed in the past.

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the 2011 group would be tasked with specific, achievable objectives to be completed within one year of its charge, she said. Such objectives would include developing mechanisms for measuring and mitigating noise impacts, soliciting input from surrounding towns, and creating a planning document to guide implementation.

According to Winter, another key aspect of the process would be providing assurances that these objectives would not be construed as a violation of the conditions of federal grants through the Airport Improvement Program or any other federal funding.

If both sides can get together and understand the needs of the other, Winter said, it is possible to find a balance between competing interests.

“Without that it’s a stalemate and the more powerful agency will prevail,” she said.

Nancy Nelson, superintendent of Minute Man National Historical Park, shared Winter’s optimism.

“I don’t think the interests are antithetical, but I think they need to be managed,” Nelson said. “We need to know what the ultimate vision is ... and make sure that ultimate vision allows for the continued experience of a national park.”

Winter said Save Our Heritage hasn’t yet received a response from the president, but she is confident things are moving in the right direction.

“We are profoundly optimistic at this point,” she said. “I think there is light now shining through at the end of the tunnel.”

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HANSCOM FIELD

Streamline Air met with protest

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It was a different scene two days later when picketers stood outside the Civil Air Terminal to protest aviation expansion at Hanscom. “[We’re] sending a message that the communities don’t want the airport expanded, especially without any kind of multimodal transportation plan,” said Richard Canale, a member of the Hanscom Area Towns Committee (HATS) and the Lexington Planning Board.

Streamline Air Managing Director Mark Cestari said the company, a subsidiary of Cleveland-based Charter Air, had been working on a deal to fly out of Hanscom for several months. Those plans were not articulated to the public, however, until a March 15 meeting of the multi-town Hanscom Field Advisory Commission (HFAC), just weeks before the airline was scheduled to start flying.

Cestari called Streamline’s twice daily flights to Trenton a “niche service” that is well matched to the size of the airport and well within established guidelines. Cestari said the 30-seat turboprop jet is “a very quiet airplane” and the noise impacts are “so minute they don’t drive any changes at all.”

But Cestari’s assurances have not been a source of comfort to local leaders and preservation advocates, who have pointed to the new service as evidence of continued airport expansion by Massport.

Critics have questioned Streamline’s designation as a charter service, noting flights are scheduled and ticketed. Cestari was adamant the operation is simply an alternate way of selling air service.

“This is a scheduled public charter,” he said. “We’re not an airline. We are a charter air company.”

Opponents say Cestari’s pitch sounds strikingly similar to one he made more than 10 years ago, when he brought Shuttle America to Hanscom in 1999. Shuttle America began with two flights a day to Trenton, like Streamline, but later expanded prompting a legal battle with the four Hanscom-area towns.

Cestari insists Streamline is a completely different animal than Shuttle America. “Shuttle was a much larger scale operation,” he said. Cestari would not rule out

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further expansion of Streamline’s service at Hanscom, but said he is assuming there will be less passenger demand.

Long-term view

In 2001, Shuttle America’s operations at Hanscom inspired outreach to President Bill Clinton that resulted in the creation of a Federal Interagency Working Group to examine the competing interests of historic preservation and economic development in the area around Hanscom Field. Today, State House and Congressional representatives have joined efforts to reach out to President Barack Obama to reconvene the working group.

In a March 15 letter, U.S. Rep. Niki Tsongas, D-5th, wrote to Secretary of Transportation Jeffrey Mullan, the recently appointed head of Massport’s board, to request that Massport put a hold on any new aviation contracts, including with Streamline Air, until a decision is made regarding the working group.

“I appreciate the need for and role that economic development plays in the health of our economy,” Tsongas wrote. “However, historic preservation plays an important role in spurring sustainable growth, sustaining our tourism economy, and maintaining our quality of life. Vibrant economic growth does not need to come at the expense of the unique historical character and environment of our communities.”

According to Tsongas’ office, Mullan said Massport could not accommodate the request to delay Streamline’s operations at Hanscom due to a nondiscrimination clause attached as a condition of federal funding for airport infrastructure.

Despite this short-term defeat, Canale said he remains optimistic that the federal working group could lead to a long-term solution.

“[Streamline Air] is a tiny piece of the whole puzzle,” said Canale.

“There has to be a partnership. There has to be a situation where everyone wins something,” he said. “I think this is probably our best hope.”

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HOUSE MOVE

Historic house finds new home

By Ben Aaronson and Michael Phillips
lexington@wickedlocal.com

Patriots’ Day is still a few days away, but that didn’t stop Lexington from hosting a parade of sorts last Saturday night. On April 9, hundreds of spectators flocked to Massachusetts Avenue in front of St. Brigid’s Parish to watch as an historic house literally rolled away.

Built in the mid-1800s, the house at 1989-1991 Massachusetts Ave. was once used by nuns and priests, but has been uninhabited since 1992 and had fallen into extreme disrepair. The church had sought to demolish the house, which had become an eyesore, but was denied by the Historic Districts Commission as the house sits in the Battle Green Historic District.

This fall, builder Patrick Carroll bought the house and agreed to physically move it from the church property to a new site at 35 Hancock St., which he had purchased from the Lexington Historical Society. The lot is opposite the historic Hancock-Clarke House.

After months of anticipation, the day of the move finally came. In preparation of the move, police blocked off roads while utility crews shut off power and removed wires to ensure the house would have safe passage down Hancock Street.

Carroll said Verizon alone had about seven trucks on the site.

“Being at 35 Hancock



The Minuteman Statue joins hundreds of spectators watching as the house formerly located at 1991 Massachusetts Ave. makes its way through Lexington Center to its new home at 35 Hancock St. WICKED LOCAL PHOTO BY BEN AARONSON

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St. and looking back towards the Battle Green, there was just a sea of flashing yellow lights,” said Carroll.

When the appointed hour arrived, a large crowd had assembled outside St. Brigid’s to watch the historic and unusual happening. Church bells rang out in song, as if celebrating the long-awaited departure of the blight on its landscape.

Onlookers of all ages, many armed with cameras and camcorders, cheered as the truck started rolling just after 7 p.m.

“A lot more people

showed up than anticipated,” said Carroll.

It was mostly smooth sailing as the house cruised down Massachusetts Avenue, passing the Battle Green on the left. The house did sustain some damage along the way, however, as low-hanging branches scraped against the side of the structure, pulling off a wooden downspout.

After passing the Minuteman Statue, the truck stopped to reposition the house for the rest of the journey, past the Battle Green again, this time on the other side, and then up Hancock Street to its final resting place.

“I think all and all, the end result was spectacular,” Carroll said. “We certainly had some issues on Hancock Street. They

were remedied pretty well by the utility companies and by the town.”

Carroll said he had anticipated the move would take no less than five to seven hours, but the actual operation ended up being much quicker.

“We were door to door in two and a half hours,” he said.

The final cost of the house move has not been calculated yet, but Carroll estimated he would be on the hook for around \$25,000.

Now that the house has landed at its Hancock Street home, Carroll said he should be able to start work on framing in about three weeks. Work on the refurbished house should be completed by sometime in September, according to Carroll.

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2011 U.S. Reps. Edward Markey, Niki Tsongas and John Tierney, Sen. John Kerry, and Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi send written support to the president.

SOURCE: SAVE OUR HERITAGE



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