

ORCHARD HILLS-MAPLEWOOD HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

www.ohmha.org

OHMHA NEWSLETTER

November 2006

Thurston Pond Restoration Update

by Neal Foster (Chair, Thurston Nature Center Committee)

As noted in our previous report (April OHMHA newsletter), there were basic differences between the work planned for the Thurston Pond restoration that was funded in 2005 by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ)—partially matched by Ann Arbor Public School District (AAPSD) funds, for a total of \$500,000—and the work recommended in the unfunded plan approved by a majority of the Thurston Nature Center Committee (TNCC). In August 2006, TNCC representatives met with people from MDEQ, the prime contractor J.F. New, and the AAPSD, and again urged action on tasks that the majority of the TNCC had recommended for Thurston Pond: (1) a limited amount of strategic dredging to improve aquatic habitats, with onsite disposal to create new habitats; (2) interconnecting deeper pools by narrow channels to facilitate periodic draining and/or sediment removal and replacing the outlet drain to Millers Creek with a redesigned structure; and (3) reinforcing and heightening the berm (dike or pond-retaining wall) on the pond's northwest side. We pointed out that during the forty-year life of the pond, there had been never been any effort to remove the sediment accumulated in the pond. But TNCC was told that the project was still in the evaluation phase, and that the results of the data collected during the summer of 2006 will determine the course of action. Further, the work we had proposed (categorized by MDEQ primarily as "maintenance" activities) was not eligible to be done under agency guidelines for administering the existing MDEQ/AAPSD grant.

So, during the summer of 2006, storm water runoff was sampled in storm sewers draining to the pond. Neighborhood volunteers, working with Scott Dierks and Valerie Strassberg of J.F. New, took weekly measurements and collected water samples to determine concentrations of dissolved oxygen, phosphorus, nitrogen, chlorophyll a, copper, and zinc, as well as temperature, pH, and turbidity in the pond. In mid-October, Scott presented the results of this water quality monitoring at a meeting of the Thurston Pond Restoration Advisory Committee (attended by representatives from J.F. New, AAPSD, MDEQ, TNCC, OHMHA, Huron River Watershed Council, Millers Creek Action Team, the City of Ann Arbor, and others). The key finding was that the water quality measurements and chemical analyses of samples of (1) storm water flowing to the pond, (2) pond sediment, and (3) pond water showed that it was the sediment on the bottom of Thurston Pond—and not the storm water—that caused the very high levels of phosphorus and nitrogen in the pond water. Hence, the pond is over-fertilized (or hypereutrophic), and this condition has been the ultimate cause of the pond's overall decline in diversity of aquatic plant and animal life, including fishes, insects, and waterfowl, over the past several years.

Pending MDEQ approval, funds originally proposed for Phase II (installing a "Restorer" or Floating Wetland) likely now would be used to remove the loose, upper layer of pond sediments by suction and dewater them in porous-walled geotubes. This work would entail either changing the existing project plan to include sediment removal

or ending the existing contract/grant with the completion of Phase I (enhancing the supply of storm water to the pond and related construction work), and writing a new contract for sediment removal. We expect that MDEQ will be reluctant to approve increasing the amount of storm water diverted to the pond unless they also can be sure that future overflow from the pond will not increase the amount of nutrients going into Millers Creek just downstream. AAPSD and MDEQ need to do something to improve water quality and flow in the creek and have gone on record as approving the spending of public funds on the project. The Phase I plan, if properly carried out, could result in better water quality and flow regimes in Millers Creek but will not achieve those goals unless: (1) appropriate engineering work is done on the pond outlet and berm, and (2) the pond sediments (with their high nutrient levels) are removed from the pond. In other words, it now may be possible that some or all the work that the TNCC has recommended can be included either in work authorized under the original MDEQ/AAPSD grant or under a new, revised grant.

Get Involved!

Ever since grassroots citizen action led to the creation of the Thurston Nature Center about 40 years ago, many neighborhood families, school classes, scout troops, and individuals have volunteered countless hours of work in the Center. They have planted or adopted about 80 species of trees (60 of which are native to Michigan) amid the thousands of trees (a few over a century old!) in the Center. If you have questions about our Adopt-a-Tree program, call Mike Conboy at 665-4027.

Now we would like to make a documentary video about the fascinating history of our Nature Center. Would you like to help? Do you have or do you know anyone who has old photographs (color or black and white) showing the earlier days of the Nature Center, especially when the pond was in its heyday and before its condition deteriorated? We also would make a five-minute video or a thirty-second public service announcement about the human connection between Thurston Pond, the Nature Center, and the Huron River's smallest tributary, Millers Creek, to be entered in the 2007 Millers Creek Film Festival. The deadline for entries is February 20, 2007. For more information about the Festival, now in its second year, see the website http://www.aamillerscreek.org/film_festival.htm. Winning films will receive prizes and a gala public screening on Friday, March 30, 2007, at the Michigan Theater. If you have questions about the TNC, or are interested in joining the TNCC or otherwise helping, phone Neal Foster at 663-0756 or email him at nealfost@umich.edu. The TNCC meets at 7 pm, on the third Monday of each month, in the Thurston School library; visitors are welcome. The TNC website is www-personal.umich.edu/~nealfost/TNCinfo.htm.

NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

Confused About Dues? Read This!

Confused about OHMHA membership dues payment? We apologize! To clarify matters, when you've paid your dues, we will now stamp your newsletter with a "paid through" date so that you know exactly where you stand. Our fiscal year runs from June 1 to May 31. If you've paid for the fiscal year, you can vote in our fiscal-year-end elections. Confusion has resulted because our elections, held to coincide with the annual Thurston School Ice Cream Social in the beginning of June, actually take place in the new fiscal year, which is when you're also being asked to renew your membership. We hope that the date stamp will keep things straight.

THANK YOU!

OHMHA heartily thanks Karen Land, an OHMHA resident who lives on Ardenne Drive, for volunteering to renew the plantings at the Georgetown entrance. The attractive entry enhances our neighborhood. OHMHA also thanks the Roths, who live near the Georgetown entrance, for generously donating the water that kept the new plants healthy.

The OHMHA board thanks all those residents who have contributed above their yearly dues. Your contributions help our board carry out such functions as keeping our neighborhood attractive and communicating issues of interest and concern.



Scott Dierks of J.F. New showed neighborhood volunteers how to take weekly measurements of dissolved oxygen, temperature, pH, and turbidity and how to collect water samples for laboratory analysis. (Photo by N. Foster)

New Program Debuts at Thurston

First Steps classes are now offered at Thurston School in the new preschool wing! This program is available for all families living in the Ann Arbor school district who have preschool children. Membership provides: classes to help children socialize with others; staff visits to support you and your families with information about child development; newsletters; and much more. Classes at Thurston are scheduled every morning during the week. If you are interested in finding out more about our program, please come to an orientation, check out our website (aaps.k12.mi.us/firststeps.home) or call 994-2300 ext. 53186. All orientations are held at the new Preschool and Family Center at 2775 Boardwalk Drive, off Eisenhower Parkway.

Missing Out on the OHMHA/ Neighborhood Watch E-Mail Lists?

This past summer the OHMHA neighborhood and the Neighborhood Watch e-mail lists were combined so as to more efficiently communicate important messages from the OHMHA Board and pass on relevant Neighborhood Watch notices from the City of Ann Arbor. This e-mail list is hosted by Huron Valley Community Network (hvcn.org).

Unfortunately, in late summer, Comcast adopted the policy of preventing all e-mails from hvcn.org from reaching Comcast customers with Comcast e-mail addresses. After repeated attempts to contact Comcast, we have been unable to reverse this policy. As of now, if you have a Comcast e-mail address listed on the OHMHA e-mail list, you will not be able to receive any messages from the list.

A proposed solution is to create a second e-mail address, on a service like Yahoo, Hotmail or Gmail, and use that address on the OHMHA e-mail list. If you want to do this, please send your new e-mail address to Sandy Smith at patinfosmith@comcast.net and she will add it to the OHMHA e-mail list.

New Bank Branch and Other Businesses to Open Next Fall

After much discussion and debate, our area of town will have a new neighbor or, more accurately, new neighbors. Plymouth Green Crossings will be a mixed residential and commercial project that developers intend to have ready for occupancy in fall, 2007.

Plymouth Green Crossings will be located in front of Ave Maria on the northwest corner of Plymouth and Green roads. It will feature five buildings and three covered garages.

The plans call for businesses on the first floors, and residences on the second and third floors. The project will be accessible from both Plymouth and Green roads. Although Tom Lasky—a commercial realtor associated with Plymouth Green Crossings—was not able to provide the names of potential retail tenants the development's website indicates that Fifth-Third Bank has committed to opening a branch within Plymouth Green Crossings.

In addition to the bank and a restaurant, the other types of tenants that Plymouth Green hopes to attract, according to Lasky, are a coffee shop, salon, dry cleaner, and cellular phone store.

Residences in the development will include townhouse condominiums and flats ranging from 1125 to 2000 square feet. The units will feature large "window walls" and terraces. More information regarding the development, including representations of how it will look when completed, can be found at www.plymouthgreencrossings.com.

OHMHA Board

Our board consists of twelve members, who in June elected our current officers:

Peter Mooney, Chair
Stuart Baggaley, Vice-Chair
Wendy Carman, Treasurer
Sandy Smith, Secretary

As we are still one board member short, we invite any current OHMHA member to consider joining us. Please contact us or attend an upcoming meeting and see whether you would like to contribute to our neighborhood by serving as an OHMHA board member.

COMING MEETINGS

Thursday, November 16
Thursday, January 11
Thursday, March 8

All meetings held at Thurston School, 7:30 pm.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Kudos to neighbor and board member Stuart Baggaley for winning in his age group in the 5k portion of the Ann Arbor-Dexter Run on Saturday, June 3.

ORCHARD HILLS ~ MAPLEWOOD HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR JUNE 1, 2006 ~ MAY 31, 2007

(Make check for \$20.00 payable to OHMHA ~ additional contributions gratefully accepted.)

NAME _____

TELEPHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

AMOUNT PAID _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Please remove my name from your email list.

COMMENTS (we welcome suggestions and/or offers to volunteer on OHMHA projects):

Mail or deliver your dues to: Wendy Carman, OHMHA Treasurer, 2340 Georgetown.

*Many thanks to former board member and treasurer Denise Schlotfeldt
for all she's done for our neighborhood!*

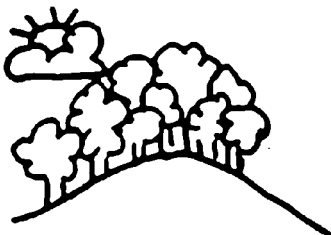
OHMHA BOARD MEMBERS

Stuart Baggaley	3111 Cedarbrook	332-1874	Vice-Chair/Neighborhood Watch
Henry Brysk	3032 Cedarbrook	369-2986	
Wendy Carman	2340 Georgetown	761-8693	Treasurer
Jack Cederquist	2145 Ardenne	665-2285	
Emily Eisbruch	2561 Bunker Hill	665-0533	Webmaster
Neal Foster	2115 Georgetown	663-0756	
Anita Jones	3359 Yellowstone	761-2748	
Peter Mooney	3352 Yellowstone	213-0440	Chair
Jill Rheinheimer	2518 Georgetown	663-1489	Newsletter (zooina2@sbcglobal.net)
Daniel Smith	2377 Georgetown	320-4494	
Sandy Smith	3188 Rumsey	769-2663	Secretary

ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

John Hieftje (Mayor)	1800 Traver	996-0493	jhieftje@ci.ann-arbor.mi.us
Joan Lowenstein (Council Member, Ward 2)	502 Burson	761-5248	jlowenstein@ci.ann-arbor.mi.us
Steve Rapundalo (Council Member, Ward 2)	3106 Bluett	476-0648	SRapundalo@ci.ann-arbor.mi.us

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