BETTON HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

https://bettonhills.us
Facebook: Betton Hills Neighborhood

President's Letter

Eliza Hawkins

Betton Hills Residents,

I learned something new a few weeks ago. Until Thursday, September 7th the term "microburst" was a vague concept on the periphery of my knowledge bank. Well like you, I learned a lot very quickly about this weather phenomenon.

From the National Weather Service: "A microburst is a localized column of sinking air (downdraft) within a thunderstorm. Microbursts can cause extensive damage at the surface, and in some instances, can be life-threatening. Wind speeds in microbursts can reach up to 100 mph, or even higher, which is equivalent to an EF-1 tornado!"

As I visited around the neighborhood and talked with friends there was a common refrain: "This was worse than all the hurricanes combined!" We are fortunate that everyone made it through the storm safely and that there wasn't more damage to our homes despite the tremendous number of downed trees. (I personally am mourning the loss of the Plum tree on the corner of Cline and Trescott and the large pine just west of the Betton Hills Community Garden. See Photos below.)

After the storm was over, I heard about guys who were going around clearing roads and driveways using their own chainsaws. I read on our Betton Hills Facebook Group posts by those offering assistance to others without power, or asking who was in need of ice or other services. A neighbor called to check on me. While I don't know the names of many of you, I would like to express, on behalf of the BHNA, our admiration and thanks to those who selflessly came to the aid of their neighbors. You are why Betton Hills is a great place to live.

So, now is a great time to take a moment to be thankful and to make sure you have plans in place to weather the next storm. If you need assistance or advice, please refer to the talgov.com PREP page (https://www.talgov.com/neighborhoodservices/prep) or contact the BHNA PREP coordinator (Mario.Taylor@Bettonhills.org).

Despite some challenges, we have had a great year in Betton Hills. Once again, our board members have worked hard representing your interests concerning a number of issues affecting the neighborhood. Whether in taking a stand on an ordinance issue, enhancing our parks, or putting on great events The Board of the Betton Hills Neighborhood Association always strives to maintain if not improve the character of our beautiful neighborhood. Please read more about these initiatives undertaken by our board members in this newsletter.

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If you haven't already, please put October 15th on your calendar and make plans to attend the Annual Betton Hills Fall Fest. There will be food trucks, fun, music, train rides, and games for all. Make sure you are on our mailing list to ensure you get updates on our events! Sign up here: https://www.bettonhills.org/mailing-list/.

All the best . . . and don't forget, it's time to join or renew your BHNA membership for 2024! See Page 12.

Eliza Hawkins, President BHNA

BHNA Officers and Board of Directors Election

The BHNA Board of Directors put the following people in nomination for officers and board for 2024. BHNA members may nominate other members for an officer or board of directors' position by October 6, 2023. Do so by emailing the person's name and contact information to: president@bettonhills.org.

Voting will occur the week of October 9-13. If you support the slate, you don't need to vote. If you don't, register your "no" vote by email to: president@bettonhills.org.

Officers:

Eliza Hawkins, President
Jim Ward, VP
Tom Schulte, Treasurer
Jennifer Winegardner, Secretary

Board of Directors:

Mike Brezin
Claire Cotton-Watkins
Courtney Doker
Mary Kay Falconer
Donna Legare
Nancy Leiva-Krause
Casey McLaughlin
Margie McInnes
Leah Pierce
Rob Pierce
Mario Taylor
Tom Waits

Announcement: Please Join Us Removing Invasive Plants from McCord Park

Donna Legare

Saturday, October 14, 2023, 9am – 11am. Meet at the Armistead Rd. parking area.

The FSU Environmental Service Program will, once again, be helping remove invasive plants at McCord Park this fall. Neighbors are invited to join in the work. Please bring loppers, pruners, shovels, and work gloves if you have them. Also bring your own water bottle.

It is always fun to work with an enthusiastic group of young people. And there will be donuts! Call or text Donna Legare 850 386-1148 for more information.

Betton Hills Neighborhood Association

HALLOWEEN CRAWL '23

SCAN ME

LET'S PUT YOUR HOUSE ON THE MAP!

Join 180+ of your neighbors working to make **Betton Hills** the **Best of Tallahassee** and add your house to our map of homes that will be handing out candy on Halloween this year! Sign up now at:

tinyurl.com/BHHalloweenSignup

McCord Ditch Project Update: Buffering

Jim Ward

Many residents likely have noticed that the McCord Ditch project has been substantially completed. The box culvert is now fully buried and sodded over. The City has resurfaced the maintenance road along the culvert's west side. A black, chain-link fence (with black slats) now provides some separation between west-side Trescott homes and the amphitheater park along the nature trail west of the culvert.

The BHNA has kept a close eye on the project from its planning stages through substantial completion. Recently, several BHNA board members and Trescott Drive residents walked the length of the project with two City project engineers. The objectives of the walk were two-fold: First, to examine the completed work; Second, to identify options for restoring the visual and safety buffers that previously existed between west-side Trescott homes and adjacent commercial properties. Much of those buffers were sacrificed, unfortunately, as a result of tree removal and enclosure of the original ditch in connection with the project. This update focuses on the results of the project walk.

Construction Issues

At least one potential safety hazard was identified to the City during the walk. Namely, a ground-level drain opening above the buried culvert had a gap that potentially could allow a pet or small child to squeeze through and possibly end up in the buried culvert. The City engineers plan to install an additional metal bar in the drain opening to narrow the gap. If you identify any other safety, construction or other project issues, we encourage you to notify the City and BHNA.

Buffer Restoration

The City engineers have suggested that a combination of fencing and plantings as the best option to restore the lost visual and safety buffers. Although a tall, solid block wall has been of interest among some residents, the City claims that it would be cost-prohibitive. Other potential buffer options that have been discussed include installing vinyl fencing along the culvert and planting native plants on the residents' side of the fencing. We are still in discussions with the City about potential options. We plan to communicate with Trescott residents soon regarding their preferences as soon as the City has confirmed the options that it believes are feasible.

As always, if any resident has questions or concerns about the project, please contact board members Jim Ward [james.ward@bettonhills.org] or Mary Kay Falconer [marykay.falconer@bettonhills.org], who have been leading our engagement with the City on this project.

Support BHNA's Jack Robertson Partnership for School Excellence Fund

Mary Kay Falconer

Editor's note: For an historical overview of the Jack Robertson fund, see: https://www.bettonhills.org/funds/.

Each year, our neighborhood makes a financial donation to our neighborhood schools, Kate Sullivan Elementary, Cobb Middle, and Leon High School. For 2022-23, our donation for each school was $500. We meet with school administrators and teachers to identify needs and to hear their recommendations for the use of our donations. The BHNA board adopted a set of criteria to guide our donation selections. Each school always appreciates our donations and encourages our participation in a variety of ways.

Our donation to Kate Sullivan focused on reading. We supplemented the supply of student books available for the summer reading program and for the book fair this fall.

Cobb Middle School recommended the use of our donation for two purposes: (1) their Agriculture Science Program and (2) to enhance the school rain garden with permanent seating and additional plantings. The vocational agriculture program enriches student understanding of animal husbandry, highlighted by a poultry coop and run. Students actually collect eggs from chickens on the school campus! The seating at the rain garden will be open to all students and staff as a mental health respite and a place to read and to write music. Funding these projects is also a tribute to the vocational teacher at Cobb Middle School, Steve Hancock Sears, who had an untimely death earlier this year.

Many in our neighborhood would agree that Leon High School is a flagship school in the Leon County School System. In addition to its academic achievements, there are impressive sporting activities, concerts and theater productions each year. Several are open to the public and FREE. We work through the Leon High Foundation to have our donations allocated for projects that are proposed by teachers. In 2022-2023, our donation focused on reading and was used to fund a request by the director of the Reading Department, Ms. Kayce Giglio. The request included specialized materials to assist with reading comprehension.

Mentoring Students—A Gratifying Way to Make a Connection with the Young in Our Community

Mentoring students is one of my favorite ways to reach out to the younger generations in our community. Both Kate Sullivan Elementary and Cobb Middle School are accepting mentors this year. Post-COVID, the needs have become more evident. Mentors meet with a student for 30 minutes once a week. There is a brief training provided by Leon County Schools. If you want to learn more, go to https://www.leonschools.net/volunteers. There is an application for you to complete online to get you started.

Meet BHNA Board Members: Leah and Rob Pierce

1. A little personal background to set the context . . . how did you decide to live in Betton Hills, how long have you lived here, perhaps what you do for work/hobbies, etc.?

We are Leah and Rob Pierce and have been proud residents of Betton Hills since 2021. We both earned our degrees from FSU and continued to build our life here after graduating. We chose to call Betton Hills home because we've always admired its strong sense of community and its convenient proximity to everything Tallahassee has to offer.

Leah, formerly a beloved 4th-grade teacher at our neighborhood's Kate Sullivan Elementary School, has since transitioned to a fulfilling career crafting adult training courses within the healthcare industry. Rob excels in various fields, and his entrepreneurial ventures span rental property management, tech innovation, freediving apparel, and sustainable lawn care solutions. Our hearts are filled with love for our two rescue dogs, Teddy and Sadie, as well as our passion for fostering both four-legged companions and teenage souls. We thrive on outdoor adventures, from casting lines on our boat, exploring scenic trails, and kayaking, to peaceful nights camping under the stars. Additionally, we are huge FSU fans and eagerly support our beloved Seminoles by attending every game we can, whether it be football, softball, or soccer. We also share a deep love for food and delight in exploring new culinary experiences, frequently venturing to exciting eateries in the area.

2. Now that you've lived in Betton Hills for a while, how does the neighborhood compare to your initial impressions?

Having lived in Betton Hills for a while now, we can confidently say that our initial impressions have only grown more favorable. This community has exceeded our expectations in so many ways. We absolutely adore the neighborhood events like Fall Fest and Food Truck Thursdays, but what truly stands out are the kind and inviting neighbors. Their friendliness and support have made us feel right at home. Plus, the walkability of the neighborhood is a dream, allowing us to explore the beauty of Betton Hills on foot. We're very grateful to call this wonderful neighborhood our home.

3. What prompted you to get involved with the BHNA board?

Our involvement with the BHNA board was sparked by our desire to be even more connected with this vibrant community. Initially, we found a sense of belonging through the neighborhood's Facebook page, where we enjoyed connecting with neighbors. As Halloween enthusiasts, we eagerly jumped at the chance to get our feet wet by helping organize the amazing trick-or-treating extravaganza. This experience revealed the passion and dedication of the BHNA board in creating memorable events for all residents. It was a natural next step for us to become more deeply involved and contribute to the continued success of Betton Hills.

4. What kinds of things would you like to help the BHNA accomplish?

We're enthusiastic about assisting the BHNA in several ways. Our primary goal is to ensure that our

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neighborhood remains welcoming to all residents, fostering a sense of inclusivity and community. We're committed to contributing to the success of all planned events and gatherings, preserving the vibrant social fabric of Betton Hills. Additionally, we aim to uphold the unique and inviting feel of our neighborhood, maintaining its charm and character for everyone to enjoy.

Save Yourself Some Grief

Mike Brezin

You've heard it before: By the time the bulldozers show up, it's too late to stop a harmful development project. Well, now you have a chance to get ahead of the bulldozers.

Check out the project website to see how and when you can participate:
https://www.compplantlc.com/

Watch for participation opportunities on the BHNA Facebook Group, email blasts, and website.

The City of Tallahassee and Leon County have teamed up to revise two growth-related elements of their (our) Comprehensive Plans: Land Use and Mobility (Transportation). The effort will address questions like: How much should we grow? To what parts of the city and county should growth be directed? What should be built where? What investments should we make for safe, efficient, and diverse forms of mobility?

The Comprehensive Plan is our local constitution to guide growth and development. All local codes, ordinances, and specialized plans must be consistent with it. However, this constitution is not written by the urban planners or special interests: **all citizens are encouraged to participate**.

Some people say joining the revision effort is not worth it. They point out that the state recently passed a law that makes it harder for citizens to challenge in court what they feel is a development that doesn't meet comp plan requirements. Or, they cite local examples of city or county commissions ignoring or amending the comp plan in corrosive ways. We can't let those issues deter good planning efforts. We need to write plans that are more specific to avoid interpretive lawsuits. Regarding the commissions' actions, we have a powerful tool: voting for responsible growth-management candidates.

The commissions have funded the revision effort. A top-notch planning firm won the project bid. A strong element in their proposal is community involvement. Now, it's up to us to do our part: Join the effort!

Support the Carol Bellamy Neighborhood Beautification Fund

Donna Legare

Editor's Note: When paying your 2024 BHNA dues, please consider making an additional contribution to this fund.

Carol Bellamy, a native Floridian, moved to Betton Hills in 1974. She quickly became enamored with Betton Hills' natural and horticultural beauty and the neighborliness of the residents. She joined the BHNA board, serving as president in the early 1980s. She then went on to be a city commissioner and, in 1983-1984, mayor. In 1991, she died at 49 after an extended illness. The Carol Bellamy Memorial Rose Garden in Chittenden Park was dedicated shortly after her death.

This fund supports neighborhood beautification and conservation projects. The fund has been used for Arbor Day plantings, to remove invasive plant species, to help fund the McCord Park sculptures, to maintain the Betton Hills markers throughout the neighborhood and to provide park benches, tables, recycling bins and plants for traffic islands. We have used this fund to set up and maintain bluebird and wood duck nest boxes in McCord Park as well as the bat house, which now houses approximately 180 (July 2023 count) mosquito-eating Brazilian freetail bats!

City of Tallahassee Adopt-a-Tree Program

Donna Legare

Every year, the City of Tallahassee provides and plants trees for eligible homeowners to increase the urban forest canopy. The trees, depending on the species, are between 5 and 8 feet in height and are native or cultivars of species native to the southeast. Here's a short video on the Adopt-a-Tree Program: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irUXVRUHV7A

Homeowners living within the City limits may request up to two trees to be planted in their front yard within 100' of the centerline of the roadway and agree to keep each tree watered for one year. If you have space in your front yard, please consider adding one of these free trees.

Trees Available in November

The City will announce the tree selection in November and you can register at that time. Walkers, runners, and bicyclists will thank you for helping shade our roadsides.

Wood Duck Observations in the Ponds of Betton Hills

Tommy Warren

Neighbor Tommy Warren provided this report about his summer observations of Wood Ducks. He hopes his report will encourage others to monitor our "Betton Birds". He notes that limpkins, too, are fun to keep up with as they move between the ponds and that watching them open snails is quite entertaining.

I generally visit the three ponds of Betton 2-3 times a week. This past Spring/Summer I had Wood Duck family sightings at all three ponds.

McCord Pond: I first saw a Wood Duck family of four at McCord in mid-April. The chicks were very small. Within 2-3 weeks one of the chicks disappeared. Several weeks later the drake disappeared. Then 2-3 weeks later the hen also disappeared. The remaining chick was learning to fly. Several days thereafter it was gone – hopefully, it departed by flying out.

Laguna Pond: In early June, I saw a Wood Duck hen with four small chicks. There was no drake. About two weeks later one of the chicks disappeared. The family stayed together until mid-August when the hen disappeared. As of mid-September, the three chicks were still together and appeared close to fledging. They were almost as large as the hen. Spotting this family has been elusive. At one point I did not see them for three weeks and then they reappeared – and the chicks were three weeks larger. Unless they decide to make Laguna their permanent home, they should be leaving soon.

Harriman Pond: On August 11, I spotted a Wood Duck hen with four nearly full grown "chicks" swimming. I had not seen this family before. I assumed they had recently flown in. I revisited the pond the next morning to check on their status. Arriving at the pond I spotted the hen perched at the water's edge under the cypress trees on the west side. Only one of the four fledglings was visible in the pond. Suddenly, that bird took off from the pond and was gone. The hen had done her job . . . all her kids had "flown the coop"!

Female and Male Wood Ducks

Mother and baby Wood Ducks

BHNA Wins Grant to Highlight Wildlife at McCord Pond

Mary Kay Falconer

Many of us recognize and appreciate how lucky we are to have parks and green spaces in our neighborhood. Each park is unique in a number of ways, but they all contribute to the quality of life we enjoy living here. One of our parks does not have permanent playground equipment or sports facilities but is visited by many people each day. This is McCord Park with its pond, trail, and woodland areas. During select seasons, the pond is teaming with wildlife, including some of our most beautiful wading birds. Several of us on the BHNA board thought it was time to highlight this neighborhood treasure.

Early in 2023, the BHNA board started an effort to create a wildlife interpretive board for the pond (see mockup picture). To supplement funding for the board's development, a team of BHNA members applied for funding through the Tallahassee Vibrant Neighborhood Grant program. The team included **Donna Legare, Eliza Hawkins, Courtney Doker, Amber Ward, Rob Pierce, and Mary Kay Falconer**. We were fortunate to have the program approve $2500 for this project. In addition to the team's vision and impressive contribution to the early design of the board, Wilderness Graphics was hired to complete the design and attach it to the aluminum stand. We also recruited artist Brian Bryson to paint a stunning rendering of the pond for the board. This fall, we'll install the wildlife board at McCord Pond near the bridge crossing the stream that flows into the pond.

Betton Hills Neighborhood Association
P.O. Box 15612
Tallahassee, FL 32317-5612

IT'S STILL HURRICANE SEASON! Be safe! Download a Step by Step Hurricane PREP Guide from: www.Talgov.com. Get a free PREP bucket (while they last) at the BHNA Fall Fest!

It's Time to Join or Renew Your Betton Hills Neighborhood Association Membership!

Not sure if you're a current member? Please check our BHNA website membership directory ***(https://www.bettonhills.org/members/).*** It is kept up-to-date as we receive credit card payments and process checks. If you haven't joined for 2023, we've provided space for you to do so below.

You can join or renew online, via secure credit card payment, or you can **mail** us a check. Suggested dues are $10 a year. Membership is voluntary. Dues are used to fund special events, the BHNA website, enhance our neighborhood parks and schools, and print and mail bi-annual newsletters, among other things. **Already paid? If not sure, check the BHNA website membership directory by year (upper right side of page) at: https://www.bettonhills.org/join/**
Please indicate your donation amounts:

2024 Dues Year: November 1, 2023 through October 31, 2024 $10: _____

Additional 2024 Donation: _____

2023 Dues Year: November 1, 2022 through October 31, 2023 $10: _____

Additional 2023 Donation: _____

Total Check: _____

Note: Additional Donations will be split between the Bellamy and Robertson project funds at the discretion of the BHNA board (see bettonhills.org/funds). If you do not specify a dues year, the BHNA will apply your funds to 2024.

Name: _____ **Write how you want to be listed in the BHNA website membership directory** (e.g., the "Smith Household", John Smith, John Smith and Jane Jones, etc.)

Betton Hills Street Address: _____ **Zip Code**: _____

Email: _____ **Phone:** _____

Check here _____ if you want to volunteer to help with BHNA neighborhood projects or events.

Mail this page with your check to: BHNA, P.O. Box 15612 Tallahassee, FL 32317