

Friends of Arlington's Great Meadows Annual Report for 2020

This report recaps the accomplishments of the Friends of Arlington's Great Meadows (FoAGM) in 2020 and updates happenings during the year. We wish to thank everyone who has helped in one way or another with these efforts.

Stewardship Activities

Community Outreach

With the COVID-19 pandemic we have not sponsored any public outreach events this year. We have however encouraged people to take walks on their own while following appropriate safety precautions.

This year the loop around AGM was completed with a new path along the east side from Sheila Road to Fottler Avenue. We plan to install trail markers and update maps in the next year.

The Excel Nursing Home off Bryant and Emerson Gardens Road closed in the spring of 2019. A town house development was approved by the Lexington Planning Board and is now under construction. When the project is complete there will be a new public parking and an access path to AGM at this location.

New Website

We started work on a new AGM website as 2020 was ending and expect to have it up and running early in 2021. We expect to use the same URL address and will be sending out a grand announcement.

Maintenance

This was the sixth year since the ACROSS Lexington paths were extended into East Lexington and included parts of AGM. The C loop connects AGM with the Arlington Reservoir, and the D loop connects north to the Whipple Hill Conservation area. The new signage makes navigation much easier, and more people are discovering these open space areas and their connections. We are now investigating some additional signage to aid visitors.

We continued with regular trail and kiosk maintenance. The boardwalks built in 2005 have been showing some signs of age with decaying treads. We thus decided to organize a pandemic-era board walk repair effort with social distancing.

These repairs started on Saturday Sep 19, and below is the appeal that we sent out:

After fifteen years the boardwalks at Arlington's Great Meadows need some repairs. It's basically a matter of replacing some rotting boards on the walkway. The Friends group have assembled materials for the repair close to AGM. However, because of COVID-19 we are not able to plan a typical workday where people just show up.

FoAGM 2020 Annual Report

*We are going to try a **team/pod approach** where people put together a team (2+), and we provide what you need. You schedule a time (can be during the week or on a weekend) and come by to get a set of materials and go to the site and do the work. This both gives flexibility as to time and also avoids groups of strangers. We have written and video instructions, and experienced people will be available by phone to provide guidance. This provides an opportunity to get your family out of the house into fresh air.*

Dozens of people participated - families, individuals, and an Arlington cub scout pack. Over 100 rotting treads were replaced, and the boardwalks are now in much better shape than before. There is still more to do and we will likely continue the effort in 2021.



Cub Scout Pack 313 at Work

Upland Meadow Restoration

In 2010, we undertook a project to restore the upland “entry meadow” at the northwest corner of AGM, which had been rapidly reverting to woodland, to its historical open condition.

To maintain this lovely meadow, we have established an annual mowing program in the fall to avoid interference with nesting birds and to minimize the impact on wildflowers. That mowing did not happen in 2020 because access was temporarily blocked by construction work on the former nursing home site. Inspired in part by the restoration work at the adjacent Joyce Miller's Meadows, we are now considering extending this restoration effort to an adjacent area where woodcocks have nested in the past.

Invasive Plant Control

We continued our efforts started in 2005 to clear and maintain a stretch along the Minutemen Bikeway that had become densely overgrown with the invasive Japanese Knotweed plant. Permanent eradication of this invasive is extremely difficult, particularly without the use of herbicides. However, over the last ten years, with volunteer labor and purely mechanical means, we have succeeded in keeping this area mostly knotweed-free and preserving a stunning view of the Meadows from the bikeway. We especially thank Greg Shenstone and others for the most recent work.

In Memoriam

Harvey Coté was a long-time advocate for Arlington's Great Meadows. He took many photos and held exhibits promoting the beauties of AGM. He passed away this last summer at an age of 95. We are currently displaying some of his photos on the FoAGM website: http://www.foagm.org/Album_Cote.htm. Many people made donations to FoAGM in his memory.

Financial

Donations to FoAGM in 2020 were quite a bit more than in 2019. Reported expenses were more because of the boardwalk repair work, but do not include the upland meadow mowing costs. We continue to hold healthy cash balances and plan to apply them to the proposed upland meadow expansion project. All our income was from the generosity of individual donors and private foundations, and was not dependent on municipal budgets, corporate funding, or fundraising events. FoAGM also continues its successful partnership with the Arlington Land Trust (ALT) as fiscal agent.

Summary of activity in FoAGM's fund balances as of the end of 2020:

2020 Income

\$ 3,515.00 in over two dozen donations.

2020 Expenses

\$ 1,041.92 Total Expenses (mostly boardwalk materials).

Fund Balance as of December 31

\$ 19,901.73 FoAGM fund balance at beginning of the year

+\$ 2,473.08 Net change

\$ 22,374.83 FoAGM fund balance at the end of 2020

We thank our new and trustworthy regular donors who have contributed to the preservation of one of the largest natural open spaces in the Arlington/Lexington region. Those wishing to make a tax-deductible donation can make a check out to "ALT FoAGM Fund" and mail it to FoAGM, Box 492, Arlington, MA 02476, or use a credit card online at www.networkforgood.org (Enter "arlington land" in the search field and select state of MA. Select Arlington Land Trust and enter "FoAGM" as a designation.)

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If you would like to help out or just want more information, please contact us at:

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