

Annual Meeting Revisits Elizabeth Island, 15 Years Later

The Board of Directors of the Arlington Land Trust is pleased to invite you to attend our 2025 Annual Meeting on **Thursday, January 29, 2026** at 7 pm.

As we celebrate the 15th anniversary of the purchase of Elizabeth Island, we will share a multi-media appreciation of our precious gem in Spy Pond from a number of perspectives. We will also elect Board members, hear a brief Treasurer's report, and provide updates on the proposed Thorndike Place development on the Mugar property in East Arlington, Symmes Woods and other local conservation projects. We look forward to seeing you in the Back Room of the Donut Villa Diner, 319 Broadway in Arlington Center.



One of the drone images of Elizabeth Island.

Tufts Students Practice Drone Flying over Elizabeth Island



In 2024 Jon Caris, senior drone data scientist at Tufts University, initiated a field trip to Arlington to give his students a hands-on opportunity to practice their drone flying skills while preparing them for careers in geospatial analysis, environmental monitoring, and emerging drone technologies. Caris is a certified remote pilot and an educational representative with the Federal Aviation Administration.

On two glorious days this past October Caris returned with another group of students enrolled in a class that focuses on drone mapping, data collection and analysis. "These outings test the students' newly acquired skills to capture

"Flying over Elizabeth Island was a great challenge. It pushed us to think about wind conditions and battery life in ways we hadn't experienced in the classroom."

high-resolution aerial imagery — flight planning, drone piloting, and adapting to unfamiliar environments — while showcasing the power of drone technology in real-world applications," Caris explained.

As part of this collaborative project, David Morgan, Arlington's environmental planner and conservation agent, will

utilize the data and analysis for future planning and invasive species management on and around the island with the Land Trust and the Spy Pond Committee. The Land Trust is grateful to members Judi Berman and Ron Rosenbaum who graciously welcomed the Tufts group to use their shoreline close to the island for launching the drones.

Thank You !

Arlington Land Trust is a membership organization that thrives because of your participation. If you have not yet renewed your ALT membership or sent a contribution for 2025, please respond to our mailing or go to the website to make your donation online. If you have any questions, and if you are interested in volunteering, please contact ALT via email (info@arlingtonlandtrust.org). Thanks again!

The Mugar Saga Continues

On March 6, 2025, at the conclusion of an 18-month hearing process, the Arlington Conservation Commission, by a split 2-2 vote, declined to issue a decision permitting the proposed development of Thorndike Place on the Mugar property in East Arlington. During the hearings the Land Trust and its consultants Scott Horsley and Michael Mobile submitted more than 20 written documents and spoke in person at nearly every meeting. We raised significant concerns about the developer's proposed stormwater management plans for this frequently-flooded and environmentally sensitive area.

We also coordinated with the Town to install continuously monitored wells on adjacent Town-owned property, in order to provide a more accurate assessment of groundwater levels than the infrequent measurements taken by the developer's engineers.

On May 1, the developer appealed to the state Department of Environmental Protection to permit the project to move forward. Land Trust representatives attended a site visit with the DEP on May 28, and since then we have written additional comments detailing our concerns regarding the developer's

stormwater management plans. As this newsletter goes to press, it is unclear when the DEP will issue its decision, but we remain hopeful that our involvement and the expertise of our consultants will contribute to a sustainable conservation outcome for this important property.

The full record of the Conservation Commission hearings, including peer review and consultants' reports, public comments, and the DEP appeal correspondence, are posted on the commission's [Thorndike Place Wetlands Permit web page](#).

Land Trust Scholarships

The Arlington Land Trust Conservation Scholarship program was established in 2024 to recognize graduating seniors at Arlington High School and Arlington-based seniors at other public or private schools, including Arlington Catholic and Minuteman. Scholarships of \$1,000 each are available to students

who will be pursuing education, volunteer service and work in conservation, environmental protection or a related field. For more information, see the ALT website [News/Events page](#). We are grateful to our generous members who make these awards possible. Thank you.

Symmes Monitoring and Forest Management Plan

For the past 11 years the Arlington Land Trust and Conservation Commission have been co-holders of a conservation restriction (CR) on more than eight acres of land surrounding Arlington 360 and BrightView on the former Symmes Hospital site off Summer Street. The CR lands include the Symmes Woods, two landscaped parks at the top of the hill, and buffer areas around the site. The terms of the CR require regular monitoring to ensure that the protected land is being maintained and the boundaries are respected.

Beals & Thomas, Inc., a land planning and engineering firm engaged by Arlington 360, has surveyed the CR land and identified numerous encroachments, ranging from dumped yard waste to structures and landscaping. For over two years the ALT and the Conservation Commission have met monthly with

representatives from Beals & Thomas and Arlington 360 to determine appropriate approaches for dealing with the encroaching abutters. We have contacted all of them and continue to work to ensure that they comply with the terms of the CR.

We are also working with the Conservation Commission and Arlington 360 on implementation of a required Forest Restoration and Invasive Species Mitigation Management Plan. Consulting arborist Daniel E. Cathcart outlined a plan last year and recently presented a more comprehensive and detailed draft at a commission meeting. The Plan includes a complete plant inventory and map, a summary of invasive species populations, a multi-year policy for reducing invasive species, and an ongoing restoration planting strategy.

Board News | Thank You, Ted



Ted on Elizabeth Island leading a trail walk.

Ted Siegan, one of the founding directors of the Land Trust in 1999, has recently resigned from the ALT board. Ted brought a valuable set of experience and skills to the new organization as a horticulturalist with an M.A. in plant science and as a "green realtor."

He was especially concerned about the loss of trees and open space as Arlington became even more densely developed through lot subdivisions in the 1990s and 2000s. During more than 25 years on the board, he continued to contribute his expertise and counsel in both science and conservation stewardship. Thank you!