

Top of the Hill Newsletter

Summer 2022



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Co-Presidents' Letter

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Greetings! We hope that everyone has been enjoying a safe and happy summer.

We had several successful TOH events over the last few months. Particularly noteworthy was the return of our in-person Community Forum series, the first since before the pandemic. Thirty-six members met at the Newport Public Library on June 14th for a lively discussion with our **Second Ward Councilor, Charlie Holder**.

Most recently, we held our **Annual Garden Party** on August 13th. Over 70 members and neighbors attended. The weather was perfect and the venue, 25 Catherine St, was spectacular. Special thanks to Mary de Pinho for hosting the party at her beautiful home.

Although still in planning, we hope to have our annual meeting in October. **The Elks Club leadership** has graciously volunteered their Lodge as the venue for the meeting. More to follow as plans evolve.

We're excited to have a new addition to the newsletter. Second Ward Councilor, Charlie Holder, will be keeping us informed about relevant city council business with a recurring **Councilor's Corner article**. Read on for his first submission.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter. As always, we encourage any feedback and ideas about future content. Please contact us at TOHinfo@topofthehill.org or santiago.r.neville@icloud.com.

Stay safe and stay tuned!

Maureen and Sandy Neville

Second Ward Councilor's Corner with City Councilor Charlie Holder

Greetings to the Top of The Hill Members and thank you for allowing me to take part in your newsletter. I will be writing to you quarterly to give updates on City Council news and hopefully give some insight in to how things are being discussed and voted on.

The most recent relevant Council vote came at our July 27th meeting concerning the Charter Review Commission Report. The report brought up 37 items that the Council had to review and vote on whether or not we would send them to be placed on the ballot for voters to vote on in November. The three most discussed changes had to do with how the current City government is being run. These items include how the mayor would be elected, whether to keep the current 4 At-Large seats and 3 Ward seats or go with an all At-Large council and setting term limits.

I voted against these items to be placed on the ballot and here's why. I believe that by allowing the mayor to be elected strictly by the voters could lead to having someone who is not competent enough in running a public meeting. I feel it is necessary to have the Board Chair to be someone who can bring councilors together for robust and open discussions as opposed to bickering and unprofessional behavior. The Chair needs to be a leader of the public as well and to be able to listen to their concerns. There is a better chance of this person running the council if voted on by other councilors as opposed to the leading vote getter. I also believe that the Chair/Mayor be allowed to be a Ward representative as well and not just an At-Large Councilor. But we will have that discussion another day.

I am in favor of keeping the separation of At-Large and Ward councilors. I feel it is important for the residents to know that there is someone they can reach out to directly in their neighborhood to voice their concerns to. As for term limits, I believe that having elections every two years is enough to keep the majority of seats turning over a little more consistently. Granted some councilors have been in their roles for many years, bit that should be a testament to how their constituents feel about them and trust them.

As for term limits, I feel that with elections being every two years this in itself acts as a potential term limit. Should voters feel a certain councilor is not doing a good job they can vote them out. I do not agree with the thought process that having term limits will allow more people to run for office. If someone has the desire and belief, they can make a difference and be a benefit to the city then running against a tenured incumbent should not be the reason to not run.

The potential merger of Middletown and Newport School administrations is currently underway. The voters of each town and City will decide if this regionalization plan happens. Newport voters will decide with one vote if they want the merger. Middletown voters will need to pass the regionalization question as well as the allowing of a \$235 million bond to build 3 new schools. If any of the three questions get voted down, then the regionalization will not happen.

I understand there are still many unanswered questions on how much of an impact this merger will have on Newport students, however, the roughly \$45 million we would get back from our \$98 million school bond could go a long way in allowing for more opportunities for educational programs. Not to mention the relief on Newport taxpayers. There will be more information gathered in the coming months which will hopefully help the voters in learning more on how the regionalization merger will work.

I am looking forward to the upcoming November election as the make-up of the Council will change with at least three new faces getting voted in. I am thankful to the Top of The Hill Association for the opportunity to share my thoughts and views in their newsletter. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or concerns and I will do my best to help in any way possible. I can be reached via email at cmholder@ymail.com or by phone at (401) 480-9079.

Respectfully,

Charlie Holder
2nd Ward City Councilman



Help Wanted – New TOH Events Committee Chairperson

Our current Events Committee Chairperson, Barb Baum, has decided to step down. A special thanks to Barb for all her planning and coordination efforts during her tenure. TOH is looking for a new chairperson to take over for Barb after this Fall’s Annual Meeting. The main responsibilities of the Events Chairperson include:

Head the committee in planning and organizing TOH events including:

1. Recurring sponsored events (Gardening Party, Holiday Party, Annual Meeting)

2. Organized no-host events (past events included the Halloween Parties, Polo Tailgaters, Blue Garden Tour, ALT Trolley Tour, Newport Historical Society walking tour)
3. Flash Gatherings (past events included TGIF at Rough Point, NewportFILM outdoor movie, drinks at the local pub followed by a movie at Jane Pickens)
4. Work with TOH's Constant Contact expert and compose emails for events and track RSVPs.

If you are interested in the position and want to find out more, please contact Maureen and Sandy Neville (TOHinfo@topofthehill.org)



Admiral Luce Park Revitalization Project Update

The Admiral Luce Park revitalization effort continues to move forward. This is the third major renovation of the park since it was dedicated in 1932; the last one was in 1999, led by Top of the Hill. Progress since the Spring Newsletter includes:

1. In June, Newport Public Services removed one distressed cherry tree, and trimmed the remaining trees. In July, they repositioned the dedication stone to the park's apex.
2. In July, a detailed design plan was developed with the help of a prominent local landscape architect, Pam Rodgers of Verde Design + Horticulture. To view the plan [Click here](#). The plan includes planting four specimen trees: three dogwoods and one elm. As these trees mature, they will take the place of the one girdled elm tree and the remaining compromised cherry trees that have exceeded their average lifespan.
3. On July 23rd, 17 TOH neighbors met in the park to accomplish a significant clean-up effort. Over 20 yard-waste bags were filled with weeds, vines, and sod.
4. On August 1st, three replacement park benches were ordered, and should arrive by mid-October.

5. In August, all four specimen trees that were available for sponsorship via the Newport Tree Conservancy Commemorative Tree Program were sponsored in short order. We'd like to thank each of the sponsors for their generous contributions.

TOH will be organizing at least two more Luce Park volunteer events this fall which will consist of additional clean-up and weeding as well as planting screening bushes and the perennial woodland garden. Additionally, TOH will be organizing periodic park maintenance days once the revitalization efforts are complete.



Summer Gardening on Top the Hill by Claire O'Donnelly

Well, fellow gardeners, I am sitting down to write the summer gardening letter wondering if any of you out there have any garden left! Mother Nature definitely tested us to the limit these past few months with unseasonably warm temperatures and very little rain.

I kept having to check my calendar as plant after plant bloomed and died way before what would be typical. In contrast, the annuals I planted struggled to survive and certainly did not thrive! All of this has led me to take stock of my garden and to wonder about some changes for next year. I am planning to lift my Asiatic Lilies in the fall and reposition them. I also have to divide my day lilies. However, that is usually in the fall, what about now?

Those of you who have grass will probably have let it go dormant by now unless you have a sprinkler system. As the temperature cools, it will return to its former glory. A couple of things that can be helpful to know about grass is how and when to mow. When the weather is this hot and dry, it is very important to minimize the amount of cutting you do. Some might call this the silver lining in this whole hot summer!

Tips for lawns:

1. Don't overwater, too much moisture causes diseases. Grass likes to be on the dry side. About 1 inch per week is usually enough, though your lawn will tell you if it needs more, and you may find a few spots on the lawn that are drier than others and may need a top up.
2. Mow high! But before you do, make sure your blades are sharp! Blunt blades will tear not cut grass leaving brown tips! Try not to take any more that 1/3 of the grass height off at any given time. Don't be afraid to leave your lawn for two whole weeks

without cutting. When you do cut, mulch the clippings back into the grass as this works like a slow-release fertilizer for your grass. It is dangerous to fertilize the grass with commercial fertilizers when it is under heat stress as it encourages growth which the plant does not have the strength to support.

This summer more than most I remember; it has been critical to deadhead and remove spent plant matter. Often this will help the plant to produce more flowers, but this year it was more of a cosmetic measure to prevent the garden from looking totally neglected. Even my knockout roses took a beating and I found myself cutting them back midsummer to offset heat and insect damage. Again, a sign of plants under stress!

Following this article is a great article for those of you with beech trees. I am sure that that article will give you the tools you need to protect them from Beech Leaf Disease. Here's hoping that the fall will see us back to more seasonally typical gardening pursuits! Till then happy gardening, early morning or evening only, of course!



Understanding Beech Leaf Disease and How to Protect and Treat Newport's Beech Trees by Pat Fulco

One of the most majestic and useful deciduous trees in America is under a severe threat from a new and fast moving leaf disease. In the decade since its discovery in Ohio, beech leaf disease or BLD has moved through ten states and sections of Canada infecting thousands of beech trees in both urban and forest settings.

It arrived in Rhode Island in 2019 and in Newport in 2020. BLD is associated with a nematode, a microscopic worm which feeds on the spaces between veins in the beech leaf and is already leaving a number of American, European and Asian beeches on the island with the characteristic dark bars that indicate infestation. As the disease progresses more leaves appear with this pattern and are thickened, disfigured or twisted, turn yellow and die. Buds are similarly affected and no longer grow into leaves. Defoliation begins in the lower branches and rises into the canopy, leaving the tree without a source of nutrition and respiration and subject to secondary diseases and insects. Death for young trees results in 3 to 5 years and may take 7 to 10 years in larger trees.

In Ohio, researchers have had encouraging results in treating this disease with PolyPhosphite 30, one of a number of phosphite products which are fungicides and bio stimulants. This liquid product is applied to the soil as a drench, so that it is pulled into the roots of the tree as a systemic treatment. The mixture of the correct amount of phosphite

for the size of the tree and water can be placed in a bucket and applied to the soil around the base of the tree either by pouring it or the use of soil injection equipment. This treatment is done 2 to 3 times during the growing season of May to August and is repeated for 5 years.

While this treatment is currently in high demand and can be expensive for large trees when done by a professional, all ten affected states have provided guidance for homeowners to perform this treatment themselves.

The University of Rhode Island has this information on its website under Beech leaf disease treatment (uri.edu). They also provide a calculator to help the user determine the amount needed by calculating the diameter of the tree: www.rtectreecare.com/dbh-calculator. While PolyPhosphite 30 can be difficult to find and was commonly only available in 25-gallon sizes, Allen's Seed, located at 693 County Trail in Exeter (401) 294-2722) now carries sizes appropriate for homeowners, with both 2.5-gallon jugs and pint sizes. Completing the diameter measurements for each beech you wish to treat will provide the amount of product that is needed for a treatment. Two ounces (oz) of PolyPhosphite 30 is used per one inch of DBH (diameter at breast height) as shown on the above website and mixed with 14 oz of water for each inch of the tree's diameter.

This treatment is more likely to be successful with healthy, unstressed trees. Trees stressed by drought, heat, compression of the soil around their roots and under their canopy are less able to resist the spread of the nematode. Scott Wheeler, the Tree Warden for the City of Newport suggests reducing stress on your beech tree by providing a wide grass-free area around the base of the tree so that a natural mulch of leaves or compost forms, or a compatible plant like pachysandra which can help avoid compression and the effects of mowing over roots and allow the tree to retain moisture. To counter the effects of dryness and heat, beeches need regular additional deep watering, preferably early or later in the day and with a soaker hose on a timer to minimize evaporation. The use of organic compost provides both nutrients and compounds that facilitate soil improvement and root growth in a gradual manner. Mark Domina of Domina's Agway indicated that a balanced compost should include soil enhancers like mycorrhizae, beneficial symbiotic fungi that work with roots to improve their uptake of nutrients while building soil fertility, and biochar (<https://www.biochar-international.org/sustainability-climate-change/>) which reduces soil density and enhances its structure as well as reducing nutrient leaching. Compost is another factor in keeping the roots of the tree healthy and growing so that it can absorb treatment and nutrients and have the best possible chance of fighting the very aggressive beech leaf disease until a more targeted treatment or a cure can be found.



Historian's Corner – The Navy and Top of the Hill by John Hattendorf

Newport, Rhode Island, has many identities. To some, it is, at its core, one of the rare surviving colonial port cities. For others, it is known for its 19th century “summer cottages.” But for many who live in Newport, one of the largest employers in the state is the United States Navy. Newport’s connections to the Navy go back to the colonial period when the Royal Navy and the French Navy were here.

Officials in Washington first thought about building a permanent naval station here in the 1820s, but a major naval shore command did not appear in Newport until 1861-1865, when the U.S. Naval Academy sought a safer refuge Annapolis during the Civil War. The first permanent naval shore command in Newport was the Naval Torpedo Station, established on Goat Island in 1869. Its current descendant is the Naval Undersea Warfare Command. Others soon followed with the Naval Training Station in 1883 (later the Educational and Training Command and now, Naval Station, Newport), the Naval War College in 1884, and numerous others.

The Navy’s presence here brought many officers and enlisted men and women to Newport. Some came as part of their duties on assignments, while others found permanent homes and retired in the “City by the Sea.” Among the many naval men and women who have passed through Newport, a fair number found the Top of the Hill an amenable place to live. The following eight officers (in alphabetical order) are among the most famous naval residents of our neighborhood:

1. Admiral William B. Caperton commanded the U.S. forces that intervened in Haiti and Santo Domingo in 1915-1916, then went on to become Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet in 1916-1919, when he cleared the coast of South America of German raiders. After his retirement in 1921, he lived with his wife and daughter for a time at the Muenchinger-King Hotel (38 Bellevue Avenue) before moving across the street to the Viking Hotel, where they lived from about 1933 until his death in 1941.
2. Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, wartime Chief of Naval Operations from 1942 to 1945, lived at 37 Kay Street while was a student at the Naval War College in 1932-1933.
3. Lieutenant William McCarty Little had several family connections with the Newport summer colony and attended the Naval Academy in Newport from 1863 to 1865, then graduated on the school’s return to Annapolis in 1866. Later, he served at the Torpedo Station, and in the 74-gun ship of the line, then a stationary training ship

USS New Hampshire moored off Coasters Harbor Island. Involuntarily retired from active service due to an eye injury, he volunteered his services at the Naval War College, where he became the U. S. Navy's leading expert in war gaming. In 1903, by special act of Congress, he was promoted to Captain and remained on active duty for the remainder of his life. His son, Louis McCarty Little, graduated from Rogers High School and became a Lieutenant General and assistant Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps. McCarty Little and his family lived at 44 Everett Street.

4. Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce, the founder of the Naval War College in 1884, first served in Newport during the Civil War in 1862-63 as head of the Naval Academy's Seamanship Department. He published the Navy's first seamanship manual in Newport at that time, when he lived at 16 Redwood Street. From 1883 to his death in 1917, he lived at 15 Francis Street. He was also a prominent figure in Newport politics, serving six years as an Alderman (City Councilor) and had three parades on his honor. He is memorialized at Admiral Luce Park, at the corner of Kay St. and Rhode Island Ave.
5. Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz. As a Naval War College student in 1922-23, the future wartime Commander in Chief, Pacific Ocean Area in 1942-45 and Chief of Naval Operations, 1945-1947, lived at 55 Hunter Avenue.
6. Admiral William S. Sims lived in several homes in the neighborhood. Between his two periods as President, Naval War College, in 1917 and 1919-1922, Sims rose to three-, then four-star rank, as Commander, U.S. Naval Operating Forces in European Waters, based in London during World War One. From about 1911 to 1917, Sims and his family lived at 93 Rhode Island Avenue. While Sims was in London, his wife and children lived at 36 Kay Street, and it was to that house that Sims returned to Newport in April 1919 with a parade in his honor and a reviewing stand in front of the house. He and his family returned to the President's House at the War College during 1919-1922. Following his retirement in October 1922, they lived briefly at 77 Rhode Island Avenue, before moving to their retirement home at 73 Catherine Street
7. Admiral Raymond Spruance, the victor of the battle of Midway, served four times at the War College, rising from student, two tours as a faculty member, then President of the College from 1946 to 1948, after which he served as U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines. In his first tour of duty as a War College faculty member in 1931-32, he lived at 4 Hunter Avenue and on his second tour, his family lived at 5 Champlin Street.
8. Admiral Harry E. Yarnell, who served as Commander in Chief of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet from 1937 to 1939, had several Newport residences. As a Lieutenant in 1913, he lived at 38 Cranston Street, then in 1916-1918 at 1 Kay Terrace. As a Commander in

1927, he lived at 21 Catherine Street. In his retirement years, he lived at 62 Ayrault Street until his death in 1959.



Photo Essay

Top of the Hill Members and Neighbors at Work and Play

June 3rd TOH Members at TGIF Event in the Formal Garden at Rough Point



June 14th Charlie Holder (Second Ward City Councilor speaks at the TOH Community Forum held at the Newport Public Library



June 16th Newcomers Social at the Lackner Residence (69 Rhode Island Ave)





Clean-Up of Admiral Luce Park

June 26th



July 23rd



**August 13th TOH Garden
Party at the de Pinho Residence (25 Catherine St)**





Join Us! Additional TOH Volunteer Opportunities

If you would like to become more involved with TOH, there are several volunteer opportunities available. We invite you to join one of our committees or volunteer to help develop our quarterly newsletter. For more information and/or sign-up, please contact one of the representatives below:

Newsletter Publishing Support:

Sandy and Maureen Neville – TOHinfo@topofthehill.org or santiago.r.neville@icloud.com

Committee Chairs:

Community – Harry Elkin: community@topofthehill.org

Events – Barbara Baum: TOHevents@topofthehill.org

Membership – Donna Elkin: membership@topofthehill.org

Welcome – Susan McCoy: welcome@topofthehill.org

Newcomers – Larna Lackner: larnalackner@hotmail.com

Beautification – John Hirschboeck: beautification@topofthehill.org

Upcoming Events – Dates TBD

1. September: Volunteer Clean-Up and Planting at Admiral Luce Park
2. Fall: Admiral Luce Park Revitalization - Donor and Volunteer Appreciation
3. October: Annual Meeting
4. December: Holiday

Useful Links and Contacts

- City of Newport - <https://cityofnewport.com> City website
- City of Newport Clean City - <https://cityofnewport.com/cleancity> Contains information about trash pickups, holiday and storm delays, recycling, scheduling trash pickups, dropping off garbage at waste management, etc.
- Child and Family RI – childandfamilyri.com. Child & Family is the largest and most comprehensive social service provider in Newport County, and one of the largest in the State of Rhode Island. It is a center for community involvement – a place where people come together to give help, to receive help and to support the work of others. With state-of-the-art Community Centers in both Middletown and Providence, Child & Family provides important services and programs to thousands of children, teens, families, and elders throughout Rhode Island each year. Programs and Services for elders include Case Management Services, Information and Referral Services and the Victims of Crime Program.
- Report It - https://seeclickfix.com/newport_2 (requires registration) You can report problems such as potholes, litter, missed or uncollected garbage, snow covered sidewalks, graffiti, unsafe sidewalks, streetlights, etc.
Second Ward Councilor Charles Holder – Go to city website <https://www.cityofnewport.com> and look him up by name in the Staff Directory tab (upper right, next to the “City of Newport” banner. You will then be able to email him through the city email system.
- Top of the Hill (TOH) Neighborhood Association - <http://www.topofthehill.org>

- NextDoor Top of the Hill – NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH OUR ASSOCIATION!
<https://nextdoor.com/neighborhood/topofthehillri--newport--ri/> NextDoor, in conjunction with H&R Block, is providing us with the \$10,000 grant for the revitalization of Luce Park.
- NewportThisWeek- <https://www.newportthisweek.com> Informative weekly newspaper with useful local-event calendars, advertising including restaurants and businesses, and reporting on local issues.
- Newport Daily News - <https://www.newportri.com>

