



Top of the Hill Newsletter

Summer 2023

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Co-Presidents' Letter

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Greetings!

We're having an event-filled Summer, with a lot of activities going on and more to follow. You can find some photos of past ones in the pages below; find out more about the upcoming ones by going to our website, www.topofthehillnewport.org, and clicking on "Events". For more information on how to navigate and get the best use out of that website, see Laurie Love's article below.

Our City Councilor, Charlie Holder provides some insights on the major challenges facing the city, including Coggeshall School development, Rogers High School construction funding shortfalls and road construction.

As usual, Claire O'Donnely provides some sage comments and advice on gardening this Summer (with at least one great excuse for not doing it!), and a discussion on our cute, furry (but very damaging) little friends the bunnies.

We have a new one-time feature to replace Mike Margonis' TOH History paragraph while he is on vacation: a Newport and Rhode Island trivia quiz. See how much you think you know about the City by the Sea and the Ocean State!

It's been an eventful and interesting four years since the last turnover of President, Vice-President and members of the Board of Directors (the Chinese curse, "May you live in interesting times" sometimes applied), so according to TOH by-laws the time has come for a new administration. The current Board and nominating committee have been canvassing for candidates, and an election will be held at the Annual Meeting (date and venue to be finalized and announced in the upcoming weeks). Don't be afraid to throw your hat in the ring! You can also volunteer as a member of the committees, especially personnel-intensive ones like Events and Beautification.

It's been a pleasure to serve our term as the TOH Association co-Presidents. We are grateful for the many friendships we've developed during this timeframe, and we look forward to remaining active in the association! See you all at the Annual Meeting.

Warm regards,

Maureen and Sandy Neville

Councilor's Corner by Second Ward Councilman Charlie Holder

Well, we are in the heart of the Summer in Newport. Even though we find ourselves dealing with the elements of the season, both good & bad, City business still rolls on. There are some great opportunities for the residents to get involved in the coming months. The people of Newport will have opportunities to voice their opinions in the hopes of steering us into the direction we find best.

The Coggeshall School development came in front of the council and the team from BCM Realty was chosen as the bidder for the project. This is the same group who transformed the Cranston Calvert School into market-rate apartments. This decision was met with some resistance, but what people need to understand is that this decision only gives the developer the chance to negotiate with the city on the project. In no way is this project even close to getting started. There will be several public meetings where folks can voice their ideas on what they would like to see happen. The developer will also have to go before the Planning and Zoning Boards for approval. We are looking at an 18-24-month process before anything can start happening.

A major situation developing is the current building of the new Rogers High School. Due to differing circumstances the project is facing massive over-budgeting problems to the tune of approximately \$30+ million dollars over the original price tag of \$98.5 million. This does not even take into consideration the \$15 million bond that was approved last year.

My concern is how reasonable will the taxpayers of Newport be to yet another proposed bond on a high school project that seems to be becoming a financial disaster? We know without question the need is there for a new school, but at what expense? We are trying to find the answers and the best way possible to solve this issue.

Lastly, my appreciation goes out to everyone who is dealing with the seemingly constant road construction. Seems like every street you turn on there is work being done. Though it is frustrating to deal with now, in the end, it will greatly improve Newport's infrastructure. So please continue to be patience and understanding!

All the best,
Councilman Charlie Holder

Top of the Hill's New Website by Laurie Love

We hope everyone is enjoying the new website which we launched in March and saw the introduction piece in the Spring Newsletter. Here are a few more elements for helpful reference—

JOIN/RENEW PAGE. When it comes time to renew, there's no need to complete the form if you used it to sign up. Otherwise, we ask that everyone complete the form to join just once to ensure we have your correct contact information. Most notably, everyone now has the option to pay online via Venmo, PayPal or Cash App. Of course, if you prefer to pay with a check or cash, that remains an option. The PO Box is expiring in September so kindly bring your funds/check to the Annual Meeting in September or other summer event if you are not paying online. One may also drop checks off with any of the Board Members if not attending an event before the end of September. We've increased membership by over 30% year to date and want to make renewals as easy as possible!

The **RESOURCES PAGE** provides helpful websites, city council contact information and links to local publications. A great page to bookmark – if the homepage is not already among your favorites. 😊

If you wish to refer to a recent Newsletter, they're all available for the current year as well as the trailing one year on the **NEWSLETTER PAGE** – nice to look back and great for new members.

The **COMMUNITY PAGE** highlights the wonderful restoration of Luce Park in 2022. The team is interested in hearing about what issues are of importance to you as well as what beautification projects you would like to see happen, so don't hesitate to connect.

There's also a new **FORUM PAGE** for General Discussion as well as Q&A. Again, our objective for the website to be interactive and informative – a useful tool for all members. Most recently, we highlighted the Newport in Bloom Garden Competition taking place in July as an example. Feel free to post an item of interest. Members with Website Accounts receive immediate notifications of posts.

The **ABOUT PAGE** identifies the Board Members – all of whom are available directly via the [Members Chat](#) (another benefit of that Website Members Account).

The **HISTORY PAGE** contains some wonderful information not only about Top of the Hill, but five fantastic books about Newport as well. I recently also added the link for the Audrain Mansions & Motorcars with Jay Leno – a must-see. Perhaps you wish for your home to be included in the “Every House Has a Story” series? Connect with Mike Margonis. We live in such a notable neighborhood in a historically significant city. Walking tours will begin again in the Fall.

Lastly, if you are having any issues with the website, please send a note to tohnewport@gmail.com I will do my best to resolve any issues or answer any questions that you may have. Again, I sincerely hope everyone benefits and enjoys the new website! Happy Summer, Laurie

Gardening on Top the Hill by Claire O’Donnelly

Well, it looks like summer is finally here! What an unusual and disappointing spring we had. A warm spell followed by frost caused havoc with many spring budding flowers such as the Hydrangeas. Blooms have been in short supply this year, so if you had flowers consider yourself very fortunate indeed. On the other hand, the lilies have been spectacular. I guess mother nature is not completely cruel.

I planted Calla Lillies and Begonias last year which I overwintered in my basement. They survived beautifully and I planted them out in June. They have grown well producing a spectacular display of foliage! Not a single flower! So, what have I learned from this?

There are two options for planting Calla Lillies in the spring. Either plant the tubers in a pot first and let them grow indoors, or plant them directly outdoors when frost is no longer expected. If the tubers are planted in pots first, start them off in March. This way you’ll give the plants an advantage and they’ll begin to bloom earlier in the year. If not wait till the middle to end of May when the danger of frost has passed. That’s where I went wrong, I planted too late! If you wait too long to plant, they will not reward you with flowers. I check on them daily with fingers crossed and breath baited but, in my heart, I know the flowers are not coming. Ah well, maybe next year!

By this time of the summer, I would normally be busy tending to my edible garden and my annuals; however life and rabbits have turned me down a different path, for this year only, I hope!

First the rabbits! Have you noticed that Newport is overrun with the little critters this year? Everywhere I look I see them. In my own garden, in the garden of neighbors, and darting across the streets in the neighborhood. They are very bold and seem to have no fear of humans at all. The ones in my garden allow me to be almost within picking-up distance before they scamper off to the safety of the trees or my neighbors' gardens. Consequently, they have feasted on my annuals! Every petunia that I planted has been eaten into the ground. In desperation I planted some New Guinea Impatiens which they do not seem to care for. Unfortunately, these don't love my intense afternoon sun and so I find myself having to be more vigilant about my watering than I would have liked to be. So, what can be done without turning into Elmer Fudd?

1. Deer and Rabbit repellants can be helpful, but these do wash off after heavy rain and this year my rabbits didn't seem particularly repelled!
2. Sometimes you must get creative to save your vegetables from critters. Try using chicken wire over the top of a raised bed to deter a pesky bunny from munching. You can also wrap the base of beans and other climbers for the same reason.

As for my edible garden (edible for people, not just bunnies!), I was traveling this spring and early summer and there just never seemed to be a correct time to plant. So, I guess I am letting my raised boxes go to fallow which is not actually such a bad thing as the crops grown in these boxes should really be rotated every year. For those of you who did get to plant this year watering has not been much of an issue. However, with this warm turn in the weather you may need to be more vigilant about watering. For those of us with no fresh tomatoes, peppers, or herbs, I highly recommend the farmers market on Wednesdays on Memorial Drive.

Happy Summer, Gardeners! See you in the fall, Claire

Rhode Island Quiz

Test your knowledge of Rhode Island by taking the quiz below. Answers at the bottom. No peeking!

1. What was the first toy to be advertised on television (first distributed by Pawtucket, RI based company Hasbro in 1952)?
2. What is the state flower of Rhode Island?
3. What is the state tree of Rhode Island?

4. What is the state drink of Rhode Island?
5. What are the counties that comprise Rhode Island?
6. Rhode Island has had three state flags in its history. What is the only feature that has appeared on each of the three flags?
7. How many America's Cup races were held in the waters off Newport, RI?
8. What are the six breweries located on Aquidneck Island (all members of the Rhode Island Brewers Guild)?
9. What is the name of the mascot for the Rhode Island based pest control company The Big Blue Bug?
10. What former Top of the Hill resident was inducted into the National Sailing Hall of fame in 2021? Hint: He was also the founder of the U.S. Naval War College.

Answers:

1. Mr. Potato Head.
2. Common Blue Violet. Voted as the state flower by school children in 1897. It wasn't until March 1968 that the violet was officially adopted as the state flower. Rhode Island was the last state to adopt an official state flower.
3. Red Maple. Voted as the state tree by school children in the 1890's. But it wasn't officially adopted as the state tree until 1964.
4. Coffee Milk: Similar to chocolate milk but is made with coffee syrup. Coffee milk became so popular in Rhode Island that in 1993 the Rhode Island state legislature voted coffee milk as the official state drink. Autocrat Coffee Syrup of Rhode Island is a leading provider of premium coffee, syrup, and coffee extract since 1895.
5. Providence, Newport, Bristol, Kent, and Washington
6. The anchor
7. Twelve (Newport consecutively hosted the Cup from 1930-1983)
8. Ragged Island, Newport Craft Brewing Co., Rejects, Coddington Brewing Co. Norey's Brew Pub (small batch brewing), Taproot.
9. Nibbles Woodaway
10. Admiral Stephen B. Luce

Get More Involved with the Top of the Hill (TOH) Association

If you would like to become more involved with TOH, there are several opportunities available. Once you have an account on the website, you can sign up for some of the many established Groups. Beach Time, Biking, Gardening, Golf, Mahjong, Sailing, and Wine Tasting are just a sampling of the diverse Groups offered. By signing up, you can readily connect with other Group members and organize events. Recent examples include the Bike Group riding together along Ocean Drive during the Elliot's Ride in June and the Wine Group organizing a French wine tasting in August. In addition, we invite you to join one of our standing committees. For more information and/or sign-up, please contact one of the representatives below (tohnewport@gmail.com or via members chat on the website):

Committee Chairs:

Community – Harry Elkin

Events – Susan Kelleher & Laurie Love (Co-Chairs)

Membership – Donna Elkin

Welcome – Susan McCoy

Beautification – John Hirschboeck

Website/Communications – Laurie Love

Upcoming Events

Check out the TOH website Event's page to see and sign up for all the upcoming TOH and community events (<https://www.topofthehillnewport.org/events>).

Photo Gallery

Below are some photos of some of the TOH events held over the last few months.

May 2, 2023: Community Forum with Second Ward Councilman Charlie Holder and Mayor Xaykham (Xay) Khamsyvoravong



June 9, 2023: Tree Walk led by the Newport Tree Conservancy's Living Collections Manager, Joe Verstandig.





June 10, 2023: TOH Bike Group participating in Elliot's Ride along Ocean Drive



July 8, 2023: Summer Garden Party in Mary dePinho's backyard





