



2024 ANNUAL NEWSLETTER FOR ALL LEEDS RESIDENTS

LEEDS LETTER

Leeds Civic Association P.O. Box 114, Leeds, MA 01053 | LeedsCivicAssoc@gmail.com | LeedsCivic.org

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Beat the Winter Blues! LEEDS PIZZA PARTY



Beat the Winter Blues

Leeds Civic Association puts on this local, neighborly party to give Leeds folks an opportunity to get together when we're pretty much tired of winter, yet it's still winter. The LCA has hosted the annual pizza party for 25 years (minus two years during Covid). No matter how busy people think they are or how wonderfully comfortable they may be at home, it's time well spent when you connect with friends and neighbors that you may not have seen in a while.

Mark your calendar for March 2, 2024!

When that day arrives, gather your kids, family, call your friends and head to the Elks Lodge. Eat some pizza, have a cocktail, see old friends, meet new ones, play games and win prizes. It will help you shrug off the winter blues!

Consider bringing a dessert or side dish to share. All Leeds residents welcome!

LCA Member - Adult \$5, Children - \$3
NON-member - Adult \$10, Children - \$5

*****ECRWSS*****

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**THE LCA BOARD WISHES YOU
A VERY HAPPY 2024!**

Discovering Leeds

By Ward 7 City Councilor Rachel Maiore

When I first lived in Northampton, it was downtown as a car-less college student in the early 90's. I wasn't aware Leeds even existed. So when I made the decision 17 years ago to settle back in the area, I was in awe as I went to check out a house for sale. I drove up Meadow Street, which was still just a sea of serene cornfields, up Spring Street to Chesterfield Road where I passed my now neighbor's lovely rolling horse farm. Then, on top of the hill, I saw, through the filtered light of pines, an old Cape with a 'for sale' sign. My heart leapt! I just knew this is where I wanted to be. On the way home, I took Reservoir Road; with so many 'happy little trees' it looked like a Bob Ross painting. Then I meandered for the first time through Leeds Village; so many picturesque bridges and brooks and old mill buildings-and a lushness that felt like a mountain village in a temperate rainforest.

During the pandemic, my kids and I started exploring the gem of Robert's Hill Conservation Area trails right across the street from us. Leeds is full of quiet, beautiful surprises and residents who deeply appreciate them.

As college 'me' demonstrated, there can be a disconnect between Leeds and downtown Northampton, where city government is seated. I ran for City Council to make sure our unique needs and issues are represented. We are fortunate to have the LCA also advocating for Leeds at the city level. We need our voices at the decision making tables. Please consider joining one of the City's boards or committees that regularly have vacancies: www.northamptonma.gov/192/Boards-Committees.

As I enter my third term, I'm still thrilled and honored to represent Leeds on the City Council. If you'd like to join my mailing list and receive periodic notices and updates please email me at rmaiore@northamptonma.gov. Please feel free to reach out to me at any time with thoughts, questions or comments. I look forward to hearing from you!

Ice Skating at Scotti's, Route 9, Leeds

In April 2022, Scotti's, the road-side dairy/snack bar and golf driving range was purchased by Larrat (pronounced Lara) Williams of Easthampton. Larrat sees potential for more outdoor sports at Scotti's besides golf practice. With golf winding down in the winter, first up is an ice-skating rink! Larrat purchased a self-installation ice rink from a Massachusetts-based company. The rink is about half the size of an NHL rink, so there is plenty of room for different groups to share the ice. Little ones and non-skating moms and dads can be on the ice safely in their own area. Larrat has been in touch with All Out Adventures as well as the veteran's community. Members of local ice hockey teams may want time slots for practice, too.

The rink will open in January, and skating will run through March, weather permitting. The rink will have seasonal memberships available for \$50, or \$75 for skating with skate rentals. Unlimited daily skating will be \$10 a day and kids younger than 4 will be able to skate for free. Rental skates will be available in a variety of sizes and styles for \$5. Larrat also plans to have special promotions for Leeds residents.

Larrat also has ideas for warming stations such as a cozy indoor space to indulge in hot chocolate and outdoor fire pits for all seasons. Since there is a limited amount of shade, she would like to plant more trees along the front and sides of the field to increase the canopy. A strip of the field might be perfect for pickleball. Another fun idea is teaming up with amateur archeologists to search the fields with metal detectors for buried artifacts and treasures!

Whether you ice skate or not, Scotti's is now a cold weather destination. As Larrat says, "Old man winter, bring it on!"

Green Tip By Amy Stamm

The holiday season is a season of parties and gatherings that help us all get through the cold winter. Often, out of convenience, people use disposable plates, silverware, cups, napkins, and containers when serving food or in cookie exchanges. This year, if you're throwing a party, consider entertaining your guests with reusable plates and silverware, and when attending parties, consider bringing your own reusable set of silverware, cups, plates, and containers. The same goes for when you order coffee at a café or get takeout food from a restaurant. We need to work together to get away from the habits formed out of our disposable culture. It's easy to pack a cloth napkin and a small towel for spills. All of these steps save countless pounds of paper and plastic when counted together.

2024 Upcoming Event

Mill River Flood-150 Year Anniversary Commemoration

May 16, 2024 will mark the 150th anniversary of the disastrous flood which killed 139 people and washed away the villages of Williamsburg, Skinnerville, Haydenville, and Leeds, within an hour, and damaged Florence and Northampton. The event changed the ecology and industry of the valley forever. The result of negligence, the flood was the first major dam disaster in US history.

For the past 7 months, a small volunteer working group has been planning commemoration events to honor the flood victims and heroes. Things are beginning to take shape! Exact times and dates of events will be finalized by April, 2024. Watch for April's LCA member newsletter! Here is what the group has so far:

1. THE MARKERS PROJECT is a core element of the commemoration. For a period of two months (May and June, 2024) 75 signposts with fluttering banners atop signs with photos and stories pertinent to that site will be set up at various points along the flood's path. The sign posts will mark where factories and homes once stood, where whole families died, where acts of heroism occurred, where bodies were found, and where they are buried. Marker texts are being written by Elizabeth Sharpe, author of *In the Shadow of the Dam: the Aftermath of the Mill River Flood of 1874, the definitive history of the 1874 Mill River flood*, and Christopher Clark, Professor of History Emeritus, University of Connecticut. Flag design and marker layouts are designed by Heidi Stevens, graphic designer and LCA board member. Each marker will have a QR code linking the viewer to the Mill River Flood Story Map.

2. THE MILL RIVER FLOOD STORY MAP will show the span of the flood water from Williamsburg to the Connecticut River with all 75 marker sites represented on the map. A viewer can click on a site location to see photos and text relating to that site. The story map is being created by Reid Bertone-Johnson, Co-Chair, regional Mill River Greenway Initiative and Smith College interns. The story map will remain on Historic Northampton's website in perpetuity after the markers are taken down.

3. THE COMMEMORATIVE TREE PROJECT - One tree (tagged with a name) will be planted along the river for each of 139 victims as a living memorial. Many will be planted in groups representing families that perished. The tree project will run for 5 years. A public gathering for the first planting will be held in May, 2024 in Williamsburg (site TBD). As the tree project planning progresses, more information will be available on how to make a contribution.

4. NONDENOMINATIONAL PROGRAM HONORING THE LIVES LOST - May 18 at Williamsburg Congregational Church. (Time TBD.) Historical comments, names of victims will be read and bells will toll for those who were lost.

5. DRAMATIZATION OF GEORGE CHENEY'S FRANTIC WARNING to Onslow Spelman, Williamsburg mill owner (complete with horse).

6. GUIDED HIKES TO THE WILLIAMSBURG DAM RUINS - More info T/C.

7. RE-ENACTMENT OF CORONER'S INQUEST AFTER THE FLOOD will be performed at Historic Northampton. More info T/C.

8. LEEDS MEMORIAL GATHERING at Main St. Flood Memorial pocket park will honor Leeds flood victims. A brief historical introduction followed by bagpipes, reading of victim's names. Rosemary sprigs and rose petals will be given out to toss in the river for remembrance. Date TBD.

9. ART EXHIBIT - Nancy Meagher's flood drawings, paintings and assemblages along with art pieces made from glass and pottery shards found in the Mill River and made by Leeds residents will be on display. Location and date TBD.

If you would like to help organize and/or set up the Leeds commemoration activities, contact the LCA at LeedsCivicAssoc@gmail.com.

Be a part of planning events! Leeds residents are welcome to attend the LCA meetings which are held in the Leeds school teacher's lounge on the second Tuesday of each month, Sept to June from 7:00-8:00 p.m.

LCA'S 2023 EFFORTS - THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!

- Published seasonal LCA member newsletters
- Published all Leeds residents' newsletter (you're reading it!)
- Held Leeds annual spring roadside litter clean-up
- Continue stewardship of conservation areas in Leeds: Robert's Hill, Beaver Brook Greenway, Mill River Greenway
- Continue to partner with Friends of Northampton Trails, Inclusive Group to remove summer trash at Mill River Greenway-Leeds
- Conducted summer Mill River water sampling for *E. coli* testing
- Planted and maintained flower planters on Mulberry Street
- Held Leeds village-wide tag sale
- Hosted annual ice cream social with free home-made Mt. Tom's
- Produced updated information panel for Robert's Hill kiosk
- Mulched and weeded Mulberry Street Garden
- Cleaned Mill River Flood Memorial stone on Main Street
- Cleared poison ivy from Flood Memorial pocket park
- Hosted Memorial Day commemoration at Leeds Veteran's Park
- Hosted annual Pumpkin Carving Contest and Kids Pumpkin Roll
- Member of the Northampton Veteran's Council
- Awarded two Bradford Memorial Educational Scholarships
- Hung holiday lights at Mulberry Street Garden



TIME TO RENEW OR BECOME A NEW LCA MEMBER FOR 2024!

- Fill out the form below and mail with a check to the address listed below.
- Visit LeedsCivic.org and click "Become a Member."
- Take a cell photo of the QR code, which will link you to the online LCA membership form.



Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

New Renew

☐ ☐ \$10 Family Yearly Membership

☐ ☐ \$25 Business Yearly Membership
(1 year LCA website advertising, please enclose business card)

Additional Donation \$ _____

Total Amount Enclosed \$ _____

☐ I would like to receive my bi-annual newsletter electronically

☐ I would like newsletters mailed. (Include additional \$5.00 for postage.)

I am interested in helping the LCA with the following:

☐ Trail maintenance projects

☐ Party and event planning

☐ Design / communications

☐ Garden maintenance

Make checks payable to: LCA

Mail to: P.O. Box 114, Leeds, MA 01053