

Alliance Letter

“An Act Protecting Open Spaces”

IN MARCH 1990, Senate President William M. Bulger, with strong support from the Friends of the Public Garden and Common, filed a bill entitled “An Act Protecting Certain Open Spaces.” If enacted, it would bar approval by local bodies of new buildings tall enough to shadow Boston Common or Lynn Common.

Senator Bulger and Senator Walter J. Boverini of Lynn testified at the legislative

committee hearing on April 3, as did the Friends, the Preservation Alliance, the Boston GreenSpace Alliance, Massachusetts Audubon and others. Soon thereafter the committee issued a “favorable” report.

In 1989 a new zoning article governing development in the Midtown Cultural District was adopted, the result of a many-faceted compromise worked out among proponents of the arts, child care, historic preservation, affordable housing and green space. The Friends and other park advocates won a cap on new shadows on the Common and a shadow protection area along Tremont and Boylston Streets.

However, before the year was out, the Friends discovered a development proposal in compliance with the letter of the new article but not the spirit. One Lincoln Street would shadow the Common from Tremont Street to the steps of the Shaw Memorial on winter mornings from November 16 through January 28, although not March through October.

The colder the weather, the more people seek sunlit areas, particularly in parks. Early in the day, when they walk through the Common on their way to work, and toward the end of short winter afternoons, sunlight is most prized and shadowed areas tend to be avoided.

Seventeenth-century Lynn Common needs protection as much as Boston Common does. Its shape puts it at particular risk. North to south it is one-half mile long and east to west only 100 to 200 feet wide. If existing two and three-story homes were replaced by taller buildings, shadows would reach all the way across the Common.

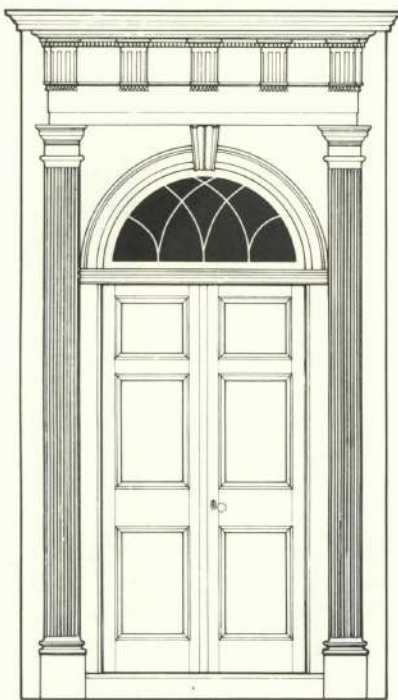
In This Issue:

- 1 An Act Protecting Open Spaces
- 2 Calendar
- 3 Calendar
- 4 Preservation Awards

The next day after the legislative hearing, Friends' leaders met with Parks Commissioner Larry Dwyer and BRA Director Stephen Coyle. Henry Lee and Eugenie Beal were pleased to be reassured by Coyle that the City of Boston does not propose to trade off environmental protection for economic gains, even in periods of market uncertainty. Coyle promptly moved to award an environmental consulting contract for comprehensive studies of potential cumulative shadow impacts on the Common and the Public Garden of as-of-right buildings and of proposed projects.

Lee and Beal reiterated that (1) they continued to support the Midtown Cultural District Zoning Article of 1989 and would work with Senator Bulger and the BRA to amend the bill so as to adhere to the agreements so carefully worked out and (2) that they would seek to assure the Common and Garden of protection from shadows from any buildings anywhere in the city, at all times of day and year.

There is reason for optimism that the two sides, once far apart on the importance of cumulative shadow impacts on our most prized public spaces, are coming together. The goal is to draft language that will perpetuate the agreements we now hope to reach. ❖



BELLE GRACE, MIDDLETON, VA. A NATIONAL TRUST PROPERTY



PRESERVATION WEEK
MAY 13-19, 1990

NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
1785 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20036
(202) 673-4000

ALLIANCE LETTER

BOSTON PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

AN • ASSOCIATION • OF • PRESERVATION • ORGANIZATIONS

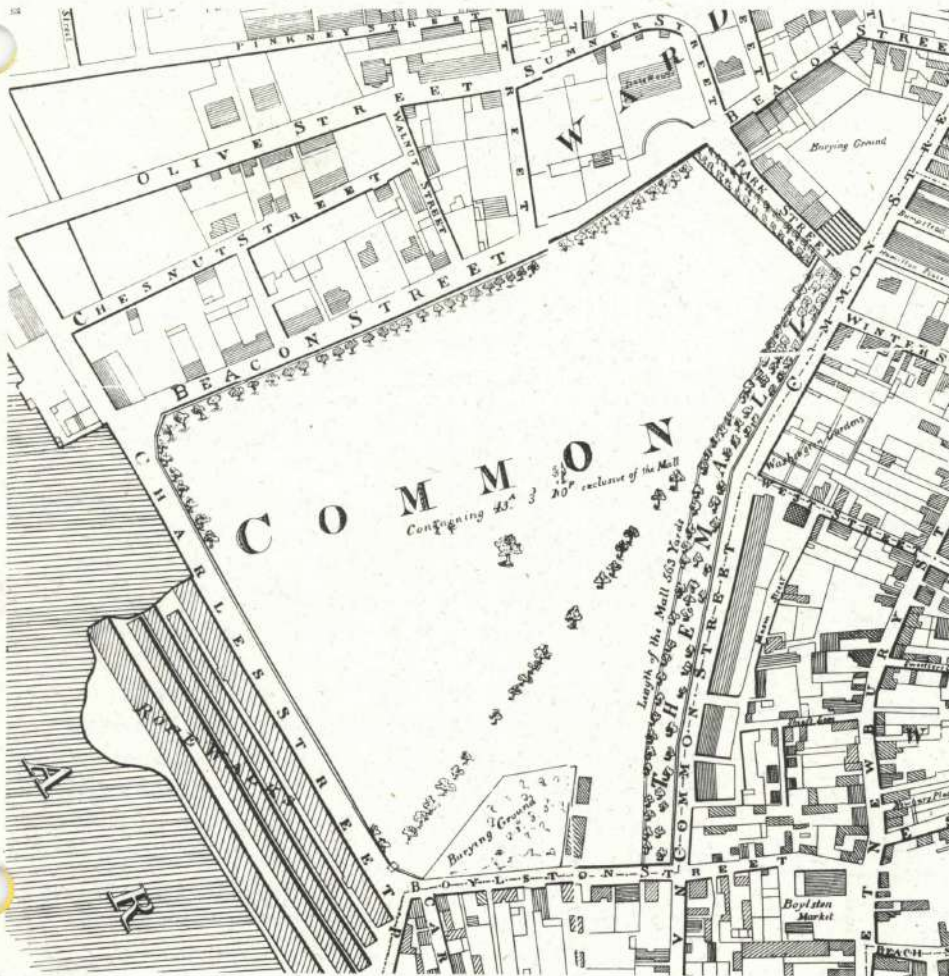
Historic Open Space Protection

ON DECEMBER 13, 1990, a bill was passed in the Massachusetts Senate protecting the Boston Common and the Lynn Common from the encroachment of shadows by new buildings. Creating this important protection for these historic landmarks, former Governor

Dukakis signed the bill into law on December 21, 1990. The bill was filed by Senate President William M. Bulger with strong support from the Friends of the Public Garden and Common.

Excluded is any structure in Boston included in a development or master

plan within a planned development area; any structure within the Midtown Cultural District which casts no new shadow for more than two hours between 8 am and 2:30 pm between March 21 and October 21; or any structure within the South Station Economic Development Area which casts a shadow upon Boston Common during the first hour after sunrise or during the last hour before sunset. Authorization may be granted for a structure which casts a new shadow if the area shaded does not exceed one acre. ♦



In This Issue:

Page

1. Historic Open Space Protection

2. Calendar

3. Pacific Field School

4. Director's Report

5. East Boston Eagle Hill Civic Association

6. Out of Town: Newton Highlands

8. John Foster Williams Rediscovered