

The Quorum Review

Official Newsletter of the Brownstone Quorum, Inc.
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January 2010

President's Message, from Jim Tripp

2009 was a successful year for the Brownstone Quorum. We continued our efforts to further develop the usage areas at the **Riverfront Park** and increased our efforts to collaborate with **Portland Park and Recreation**.

In addition, the Brownstone Quorum once again sponsored the **Brownstone Festival**. 2009 would not have been the success it was without the hard work and dedication of our volunteers.

In 2009 we continued our development of the Riverfront Park. Planning for additional usage areas, such as a **stage area** and a **picnic pavilion**, is ongoing. We continued to maintain the trails and picnic usage area, which included opening up more **river views** to enhance views of the river. In August we supported a program with the Parks and Recreation whereby some of the kids in the summer program built picnic tables for the riverfront area. Please **plan to visit the park in the spring** and enjoy a picnic by the river. Our hope is that this area will be used for an increasing array of town-wide events in the coming years.

We have established **three main goals** for the park in 2010. The **first** goal centers around developing a **new access road into the park**. In 2009 Brownstone Ave was extended to connect to Middlesex Ave Extension. This is a very positive development as accessing the park via Middlesex Ave provides both safer access, away from the bridge, and beautiful views of the quarries and river. However, as a result, the existing entrance into the park has to be changed. The Brownstone Exploration and Discovery Park has been supporting us by allowing us to access the park via their parking lot at the end of Brownstone Ave. Our goal is to have a new entrance to the park in place for the summer of 2010. Our **second** goal for 2010 is the **installation of a gate** and parking area at the riverfront area. The goal is to better secure the riverfront and to prevent vehicular traffic in the park. The **third** goal is to establish a **process for consistent maintenance of the riverfront area** to ensure that the grass is maintained and that the area remains inviting for public use. In summary, we have ambitious goals for 2010 and will continue to depend on the support of our members and volunteers.

The **2009 Brownstone Festival** was a great success. **Jeanne Dilworth** once again chaired the Festival Committee and the Brownstone Quorum hosted a **cookout at the riverfront**. We had a great turnout. We served hundreds of burgers and hot dogs, and **Dave Kuzminski** provided the music. There were many events in town throughout the day, such as games and activities on the green, rides on antique fire engines, and food and music at the riverfront.

2009 was a very strong year for Brownstone Quorum membership. In fact, we reached over **200 paid memberships**. We hope and need to continue this trend in 2010. Simply stated, the more support we have from the

community the more we can accomplish. It is important to note support comes in many forms, with some able to give time and others able to support our efforts through financial support. Both are critical to our success. If you are a member and have not yet paid your 2010 dues, please take the time to do so in the **self addressed envelope** we have provided. Your continued support is **greatly** appreciated. Thank you.

2010 is shaping up to be an interesting and transformative year. We are planning some significant changes to the entrance to the park and anticipate increased usage this summer. We look forward to continued momentum in 2010 and are confident that with your continued support we will meet our 2010 goals. We look forward to seeing you at the Riverfront Park, one of our quorum events, work parties, or meetings soon.

Alison Guinness to speak at Annual Meeting

Ever wonder how the New York brownstone got its name? From right here in Portland, Connecticut. Thousands of cubic yards of sandstone from Portland were shipped to New York on special schooners called brownstoners for use in building construction. Portland had all the right things at the right time to create one of the largest quarrying operations in the history of the United States. The guest speaker at our Annual meeting will be Alison Guinness, who will tell us the story of Portland Brownstone, **7pm on Monday January 25 at the Portland Library**.

Alison Guinness is a **naturalist and historian** with a long interest in the uses of Connecticut's natural resources, especially brownstone. She's taught environmental science in the CT Community College system and lectures on Connecticut quarries. She was partially responsible for the National Historic Landmark designation of the Portland brownstone quarries. She worked as the curator at the Connecticut River Museum, mounting numerous exhibits, including one on brownstone. She was also part of the team that excavated the Venture Smith homestead and burial sites. She holds degrees in history and science from the University of Connecticut and Wesleyan University.

Organization Committee Report, Gloria Gdovin

We started off the 2009 Quorum year with guest speaker **John Monroe**, Program Director of a Division of National Park Service in Boston at our well attended Annual meeting at the Portland Library.

In February the new Park and Rec Director, **Shawn Dwyer** was brought up to date by **Eunice Wiseman** as to the plans the Quorum would like to put into action with the help of the Town; handicap access to park, electric service to the park, parking lots, etc. The new Middlesex Avenue extension now joins the Brownstone Avenue bringing Town residents closer to the Park entrance. Also, **Kearn Enright**, a Portland writer, told us how she is writing a children's book relating to the

Quarry history with beautiful illustrations - it should be available very soon.

At our April quarterly meeting, **Peter Marteka**, *Hartford Courant* reporter, presented a wonderful pictorial of Connecticut walks and hiking trails, invigorating all who attended to visit the interesting sites. May 9th brought our group to another **Town Wide Tag Sale** day at the Dilworth home on Prospect Street. Everyone contributed interesting items to sell and hard work to present them in their best light, realizing a sizable contribution to the Quorum goals.

Dedication of the **Michael Troderman Memorial** was beautifully completed with an engraved plaque mounted into a brownstone bench overlooking the Connecticut River. Family and friends were in attendance to complete the special event.

The **Brownstone Exploration and Discovery Park** offered four free days during the summer to Portland residents; despite the weather they were well attended and a good time was had by all. Plans are progressing with **Kogut Nurseries of Meriden** who offered to help the Quorum with landscaping equipment at the Riverfront Park - Spring will be a busy time for us all. Summer work parties were productive toward manicuring the grounds for the September 12th Festival Picnic for Portland residents; mowing the picnic area and clearing the trees for a better river view.

Wesleyan University English **Professor Indira Karamcheti** contacted the Quorum and Historical Society for help in organizing Town residents with members of their families who worked at the Quarries to be interviewed by her students (14) enrolled in the **Oral History/Oral Tradition class**. We were able to gather eight willing residents to be interviewed by the students; the culmination of their work was very enlightening and professionally presented at the Portland and Middletown libraries in December.

In July, **Delores Bates** organized a **Kid Advisory Camp** at the **Brownstone Intermediate School** for the week of July 27. She came to us for help in facilitating the construction of picnic tables to be used at the Riverfront Park. We provided the pressure treated lumber and bolts and the students put the tables together in time for our September family picnic; it was a wonderful addition to the park. The **Fifth Annual Brownstone Festival** was attended by ~240 residents, enjoying hamburgers, hotdogs, coleslaw, chips and brownies with beverages. Historical artifacts and pictures were displayed by **Bill Barrows**, **Jack Dillon** and the **Portland Historical Society**, at tables adjacent to the picnic area. Giant pumpkins, scout displays, and live music was also enjoyed by all.

October guest speaker **Ralph Lewis**, retired **State Geologist**, mesmerized the audience at our quarterly meeting with his power point presentation of the **geologic formation of the Middlesex valley area**. This information is being incorporated into a future course at the High School/Middle School to educate the students of their rich geological hometown. October also brought the **Portland Fair** to Town and our booth gave us a chance to survey the residents as to the things that they would like to see developed at the Park and how these ideas can be implemented into the physical area. Hiking trails, summer concerts, picnic pavilion, sports, exercise classes, winter sports, etc.

Design Committee Report,

Frank Winiski

1) Planning around construction/placement of a **new gate to the park** continued throughout the year; this was continually impacted by the need to coordinate with the town's development of the new Brownstone Av. Extension and resulting landscaping changes in the park area near "**Susie's Wall**".

2) The "**Heritage Plaza**" area was cleared of small trees, brush, and poison ivy; mulch was placed around the large tree adjacent to the roadway. Plans for the possible construction of a raised "stage" of stone and gravel were discussed for this area.

3) New town **Park/Rec Director Shawn Dwyer** started in May; he was escorted on a tour of the park area and informed of the work the Quorum has accomplished and has planned for the future. Monthly meetings between Shawn and B.Q. Design Committee representatives were initiated to help coordinate efforts; these will continue.

4) Plans for the **town boat launch**, which included development of property adjacent to the present "open space" park area cleared by Quorum members, were put on indefinite hold. These uncertain town plans, however, continued to influence Quorum design/executive committee concerns and decisions related to the placement of a new gate and work on "**Heritage Plaza**"/"open space" area.

5) **Work parties** continued throughout the year; recruiting additional people to help with the work has always been a concern. Work included repairing extensive ATV damage to the grassy "open space", the clearing/mulching of the "Heritage Plaza" area, cutting grass/raking of "open space" multiple times – especially in preparation for the Brownstone Festival events in this area (**thanks to Steve and Cari Klick**), clearing of trails (**thanks to John LeShane**), clearing invasive plants, continued clearing of the riverbank area, clearing and preparation of the site for the "**Mike Troderman Memorial**" – a stone bench that was installed with the direction of **Alice Shumacher** and dedicated on 6/20/09.

6) Plans to clear the "**Big Pine**" area for possible placement of a pavilion and/or gardens and a labyrinth were discussed. Representatives from the Quorum talked on site with **Brian Kogut** (who operates a nursery in town) concerning his possible help with clearing this area and/or donating trees for future landscaping. **John LeShane** marked trees to save in this area.

7) **Sue Fieldler** continued her work on refining **maps/plans for park** area ideas in conjunction with input from the Quorum, the town Park/Rec Department, the town Police Department, Zoning officials and others.

8) Three **wooden picnic benches** were completed by **town scouts** and installed at the park in time for the Brownstone festival.

9) Major issues that remain to be addressed next include the placement, design and funding of a **pavilion**; the placement and design of a **new gate**; the continued development of "**Heritage Plaza**"; plans and clearing of the "**Big Pine**" area; the continuation of **park maintenance**.

Income

• Funds from 2008 year end	\$2845.00
• Membership Fees	\$1980.00
• Grant from Town of Portland	\$2000.00
• Donations	\$1359.00
• Fundraising(Tag sale/Merchandise)	\$ 970.00

Major Expenses

• Brownstone Festival	\$1491.82
• Insurance	\$ 830.00
• Mike's Bench	\$1017.60
<i>(Majority of fund's donated in Mike's memory)</i>	
• Quorum Review	\$ 621.25
• Riverfront Picnic Tables with Park and Rec.	\$ 737.86
• Completion of Arch Pavilion Project	
<i>(Project had a separate account for payments)</i>	
○ Camera	\$1430.00
○ Interpretive Sign	\$1105.83
○ Landscaping.	\$ 345.33
○ Lighting	\$ 178.05
○ Completion of Bricks	\$ 459.16
Year End Funds to transfer to 2010	\$4279.60

Membership in The Brownstone Quorum, Inc. is open to all. Dues are ten dollars (\$10.00) per person per calendar year. The Quorum has no paid representatives. All monies received go toward Quorum activities (see below). The date on your address indicates the last membership renewal. A self-addressed return envelope is included if your membership has lapsed.

We welcome all supporters and whatever degree of participation they choose. A reading of this issue will apprise you of the variety of opportunities for fun (and service).

Call me if you have any questions.
Romanie Gussenhoven, Chair, at 342-7237

Quorum Calendar

2010 Events To Think About And Dates To Remember

Brownstone Quorum Open Meeting: Monday, January 25th, 7 PM - Alison Guinness, Mary Flood Room Portland Library, 7:00 PM

Monthly Workdays - first Saturday 9:00 AM to noon - at the Riverfront Park, weather permitting,

Monthly Trail clearing - first Tuesdays - at the Riverfront Park, weather permitting,

6th Annual Brownstone Festival: Saturday, September 11th. The Quorum sponsors this Festival each year to give the townspeople an opportunity to meet and enjoy their Town and each other.

11th Annual Portland Agricultural Fair: Friday, Saturday and Sunday, October 8,9,10. The Quorum will be there with a booth in the Pole Barn.

Note: *Because much of the work the Quorum will be doing this year will be actual labor in clearing and developing the Park itself, the regular meeting schedule has been changed. Four community meetings will be held instead of the monthly meetings currently scheduled. Notice of these meetings, agendas, times and places will be provided in Rivereast and on the website.*

Newsletter: Jeanne Dilworth & Bob McDougall

The Brownstone Quorum, Inc.

2009 Officers

President:	James Tripp
Vice President:	Cindy Andrus
Treasurer:	Tom Bransfield
Recording Secretary:	Cari Klick
Corresponding Secretary:	Gloria Gdovin
At Large:	Debbie Machnik Howard Rosenbaum

2009 Committees

Design:	Frank Winiski
Mailing:	Luiza McDougall
Membership:	Romanie Gussenhoven
Program:	Nan Zimmer
Newsletter:	Jeanne Dilworth
Organization:	Eunice Wiseman
Promotion/Education:	Jeanne Dilworth
Web Site:	Bob McDougall

BrownstoneQuorum@Yahoo.Com
 www.BrownstoneQuorum.Org

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The Quorum Review

January 2010

Annual Meeting:
Monday, January 25th 2010
Portland Library 7^{PM}