

**Janice Weichman**

Welcome to Wilson Mill Park, and thank you for joining us on this spring afternoon to celebrate renewal in what Mimi Adler liked to refer to as the "jewel of Bedford."

My name is Janice Weichman, and I am a member of the Wilson Mill Park Planning Committee, an ad hoc Committee of the Bedford Selectmen formed under the guidance of Gordon Feltman in 2003...with the mission to protect, foster and advocate for this historic mill site and surrounding natural habitat.

I would like to thank all the current and past members of the Wilson Mill Park Planning Committee who met the first Wednesday of every month for ten years. Dorothy Africa, Philippe Kelty, Tom Pinney, Mike Rosenberg, our Selectmen liaison, and Art Ellis, our liaison from the Historic Preservation Commission. Former members of the Wilson Mill Committee have included Neil Leary, Myles McDonough, Karl Winkler, Lee Yates, Bob Slechta, and Brian Bartkus.

I like to refer to our group as "the little Committee that could." At times over the past ten years, our work progressed like a chapter out of Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. My personal low point came after we had met all the necessary ConCom requirements, had successfully bid out the Park beautification job, and the contractor began putting protective hay bales in place to begin work...when a large sink hole was discovered on the bridge and the dam was later condemned by the state...bringing our Park restoration efforts to a screeching halt. That was back in 2007. But, we kept the faith! We persevered with the help of many Town Departments and Committees.

We would like to thank both Rich Warrington and Adrienne St. John and their team at the Department of Public Works...with a special shout-out to Kristin Dowdy and Matthew Shuman... for their hard work in bringing this project to completion. Adrienne and Rich, we have a little something for you. This is the best sparkling wine money could buy while still adhering to the Massachusetts State Ethics guidelines.

We would also like to thank the Bedford Historic Preservation Commission who have walked every step of this journey with us. We also thank Elizabeth Bagdonas and the Bedford Conservation Commission for their close counsel throughout the project...most recently in helping us select native plantings throughout the Park. And, we are especially grateful to the Community Preservation Committee who were early and enthusiastic supporters of our work. Their sustained funding made all this possible.

This afternoon we will also recognize two people who were instrumental in ensuring the future of the Park, Gordon Feltman and Mimi Adler. Selectmen Mark Siegenthaler will dedicate the bridge to Gordon. And, Don Corey will dedicate a park bench that overlooks the mill ruins to Mimi.

I am delighted to announce that Gordon's family is here to share in this event. I would like to give a big welcome to Carol, Laura, Amanda, and Rebecca Feltman (who traveled up from Virginia to be with us today), and Sheila (who traveled all the way from Colorado) ... it is truly wonderful to have you back in Bedford.

I wanted to say a few personal words about Wilson Mill Park. This land was a busy place hundreds of years ago, and it is still a vital crossroad today. People from the neighborhood bring their children to visit the pond, others stroll or walk their dogs, bicyclists commute through the park, lunch time joggers from businesses down the road move in packs over the bridge. On weekends, serious bikers and hikers fill the parking lot to access the back woods. And, in winter, if all conditions are right...then there is ice skating...not just any skating, but magical Currier & Ives skating. And, I'm here to tell you that it is possible to take a kayak from the pond upstream to Flatbread Pizza, dock the boat near the restaurant's parking lot, and return home with two large pies. I know because my son has done it. I am very grateful for all the people in the Town of Bedford that have helped to restore this beautiful place.

In few moments Don Corey, from the Historic Preservation Commission, will give an overview of the rich history of the Wilson Mill site dating back to the 1600's. But first, Adrienne St. John of Bedford DPW would like to say a few words.