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Residents Dedicate New Pavilion in Bristow Park

By **Connor Markey** | 10 hours ago

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Residents and open space advocates gathered Thursday afternoon at one of New Canaan's prized public open spaces to dedicate a new pavilion.

About 20 people attended a ceremony in Bristow Park that featured live music and food.

"It's the third-oldest bird sanctuary in the country," said Chris Schipper, chair of the Conservation Commission. "The fact that New Canaan, even 100 years ago, was thinking of conservation—this is an example of it. They set aside 17 acres, almost in the middle of town for birds and for wildlife, and for beautiful woods."

The pavilion is the newest addition to Bristow, which is undergoing a major restoration ahead of its 100th anniversary in 2024. The pavilion is designed to help allow visitors to enjoy outdoor events in the 17-acre park, located between Mead Park and Route 106. Other planned improvements include replacing an unsightly gravel pit with a wildflower meadow, Schipper said.

While most of the current restoration efforts are focused on fixing bridges and improving trails, the pavilion will serve as a visual reminder to visitors that New Canaan's dedication to conservation is still ongoing, he said.

Prior to the unveiling of a plaque affixed to the pavilion, attendees were treated to a unique woodwind quintet composition, created specially for the commencement by New Canaan native [Gwyneth Walker](https://www.gwynethwalker.com/) (<https://www.gwynethwalker.com/>), and performed by Harmonia V, a professional woodwind quintet with members from all across Connecticut.

A lifelong visitor to the Bristow Bird Sanctuary and Wildwood Preserve, Walker said she offered to compose a musical suite for the ceremony as soon as she learned of the restoration efforts.

"I walk through this park all the time, so I thought if any composer would be a right choice to celebrate the bird sanctuary, I would be," Walker said. "I think that writing something for your own community is always worthy. I mean, what good are you if you're a composer and



The new pavilion in Bristow. Credit: Connor Markey



Harmonia V quintet, from left to right, Jennifer Berman (flute) Janet Rosen (Oboe) Robert Hoyle (French Horn), Jackie Joyner (Bassoon), Jim Forgey (Clarinet). Credit: Connor Markey



Martin McLaughlin, Arthur Berry, Chris Schipper, after the unveiling of the plaque Credit: Connor Markey

your neighbors and your neighborhood?”

Each movement of the suite was inspired by various different aspects of life in the sanctuary, she said, such as “In Flight,” which represented the daily life of the sanctuary’s birds, or “Something Underfoot,” a faster piece which was inspired by squirrels and chipmunks

you live across the street and you can’t do something that can speak to

of the sanctuary. More details about each composition could be found in a flier shared with attendees.

In addition to her musical composition, Walker curated five poems that were read out loud between each movement. She also surprised attendees with a bonus musical arrangement, “Apple Cart Rag,” which she composed just several days before the event, paying homage to the snack bar bearing the same name.

As the ceremony drew to a close, Schipper invited Marty McLaughlin and Arthur Berry up in front of the crowd, and gave his thanks to some of the various staff members responsible for the restoration efforts.

“I’d like to start with Keith Simpson and William Pollack, our wonderful landscape architects who have designed the outline of the park,” he said.

Schipper also gave his thanks to Susan Sweitzer and Ann Sylvio, his fellow commissioners, along with Elle Smith and Cristen Cottrell from the New Canaan Land Trust, Robin Bates-Mason, a Town Councilman, as well as Ty Tan, who works with the New Canaan Beautification League.

“When you’re on a commission, you get inspired by the people around you, and I find them remarkably inspiring and helpful,” Schipper said.

He also welcomed Sven Englund, a former Town Councilman, and in Schipper’s words, “A constant voice for nature, and the environment, maintaining that rural and rustic charm of New Canaan.”

After a toast and a round of applause, McLaughlin and Berry unveiled the plaque, marking the end of the ceremony, welcoming a small but significant addition to our town.



Gwyneth Walker. Credit: Connor Markey