Town of Mansfield
Agenda Item Summary

To: Town Council
From: Matt Hart, Town Manager MWH
CC: Maria Capriola, Assistant Town Manager; Linda Painter, Director of Planning and Development; Curt Vincente, Director of Parks and Recreation; Jennifer Kaufman, Natural Resources and Sustainability Coordinator
Date: July 14, 2014
Re: Open Space Acquisition, Sawmill Brook Lane Parcel

Subject Matter/Background

The 13 Puddin Lane Property is a 9.15-acre parcel offered for sale to the Town by Willard J. Stearns and Sons, Inc. The property was appraised in December 2012 by an appraiser hired by Willard J. Stearns and Sons, Inc. for $30,000 and for $9,500.00 in August 2013 by an appraiser hired by the Town. As discussed with the Town Council in executive session as allowed by state statute, the Town and the seller have agreed to a sales price of $20,000.00.

The land-locked parcel lies northeast of Jacob's Hill Road (access by a trail from the east side of the cul-de-sac). On three sides it abuts either Town or Joshua's Trust land (Sawmill Brook Preserve). On the west side it abuts a private driveway (see attached maps). The Nipmuck Trail follows the east boundary of this property. The land rises gradually to the northwest and is forested with the same trees as the adjoining land - mature oaks with a beech understory. Wetlands and a brook cross the property from northwest to southeast.

Open Space Preservation Committee members visited the property on June 8, 2013 and reviewed this parcel with reference to its location and according to the criteria in the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development. The following is a summary of the committee's review:

1. *Significant Conservation and Wildlife Resource* - The parcel is located in a significant forest area within the Kidder-Sawmill Brook streambelt (see Appendix J).

2. *Conserves, preserves or protects notable wildlife habitats and/or plant communities* - This parcel is located in the middle of a preserved section of a large interior forest between Crane Hill Road and Puddin Lane. Preservation of the site would protect the ecological benefits of this

property as well as the surrounding preserved parcels. Preservation would also contribute to the overall protection of this large forest tract.

3. *Creates or Enhances Connections* - A well-worn trail begins on Town land at the end of Jacobs Hill Road and follows the south edge of the Stearns property to a junction with the Nipmuck Trail, which proceeds along the east edge. The Stearns property is part of the viewshed from these trails, and it provides a buffer from an adjoining house to the west. A loop trail may be possible on the Stearns property for further enjoyment of this scenic forest area.

Financial Impact

As stated above, the agreed upon sales price totals $20,000. There is a sufficient balance in the Town's Open Space Acquisition Fund to cover this cost.

Recommendation

The OSPC and staff recommend that the Town continue to pursue the acquisition of this property. In accordance with the Town's *Planning, Acquisition and Management Guidelines for Open Space, Park, Recreation, Agricultural Properties and Conservation Easements*, the next steps in the process would be to refer the proposed acquisition to the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) for review pursuant to CGS §8-24 and to schedule a public hearing.

If the Town Council supports this recommendation, the following motion is in order:

Move, to refer the proposed purchase of the 9.15-acre parcel located at 13 Puddin Lane to the Planning and Zoning Commission for review pursuant to Section 8-24 of the Connecticut General Statutes, and to schedule a public hearing for 7:30 PM at the Town Council's regular meeting on July 28, 2014 to solicit public comment regarding the proposed purchase.

Attachments

1) Open Space Preservation Committee Report
2) Map of 13 Puddin Lane Property in relation to Saw Mill Brook Preserve and Wolf Rock Preserve.
3) Appendix J and K of the 2006 Plan of Conservation and Development
4) *Planning, Acquisition and Management Guidelines for Open Space, Park, Recreation, Agricultural properties and Conservation Easements*

OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Recommendation concerning acquisition of the Stearns property (at Sawmill Brook Preserve)

June 17, 2014

To: Mansfield Town Council, Town Manager

At the Open Space Preservation Committee's June 17, 2014 meeting, the committee reviewed in executive session a 7-acre land-locked property off Jacob's Hill Road that Willard J. Stearns and Sons, Inc. is offering to the Town. The committee reviewed this parcel with reference to its location and to criteria in the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). Committee members visited the property on June 8, 2013.

DESCRIPTION

The land-locked parcel lies east of Jacob's Hill Road (access by a trail from the east side of the cul-de-sac). On three sides it abuts either Town or Joshua's Trust land (Sawmill Brook Preserve). On the west side it abuts a private driveway. The Nipmuck Trail follows the east boundary of this property. The land rises gradually to the northwest and is forested with the same trees as the adjoining land: mature oaks with a beech understory. Wetlands and a brook cross the property from northwest to southeast.

CRITERIA IN APPENDIX K of POCD

1. A Significant Conservation and Wildlife Resource

The parcel is located in a significant forest area within the Kidder-Sawmill Brook streambelt (see Appendix J).

3. Conserves, preserves or protects notable wildlife habitats and/or plant communities

This parcel is located in the middle of a preserved section of a large interior forest between Crane Hill Road and Puddin Lane. Preservation of this parcel would protect the ecological benefits of this property as well as the surrounding preserved parcels. It would also contribute to the overall protection of this large forest tract.

7. Creates or Enhances Connections

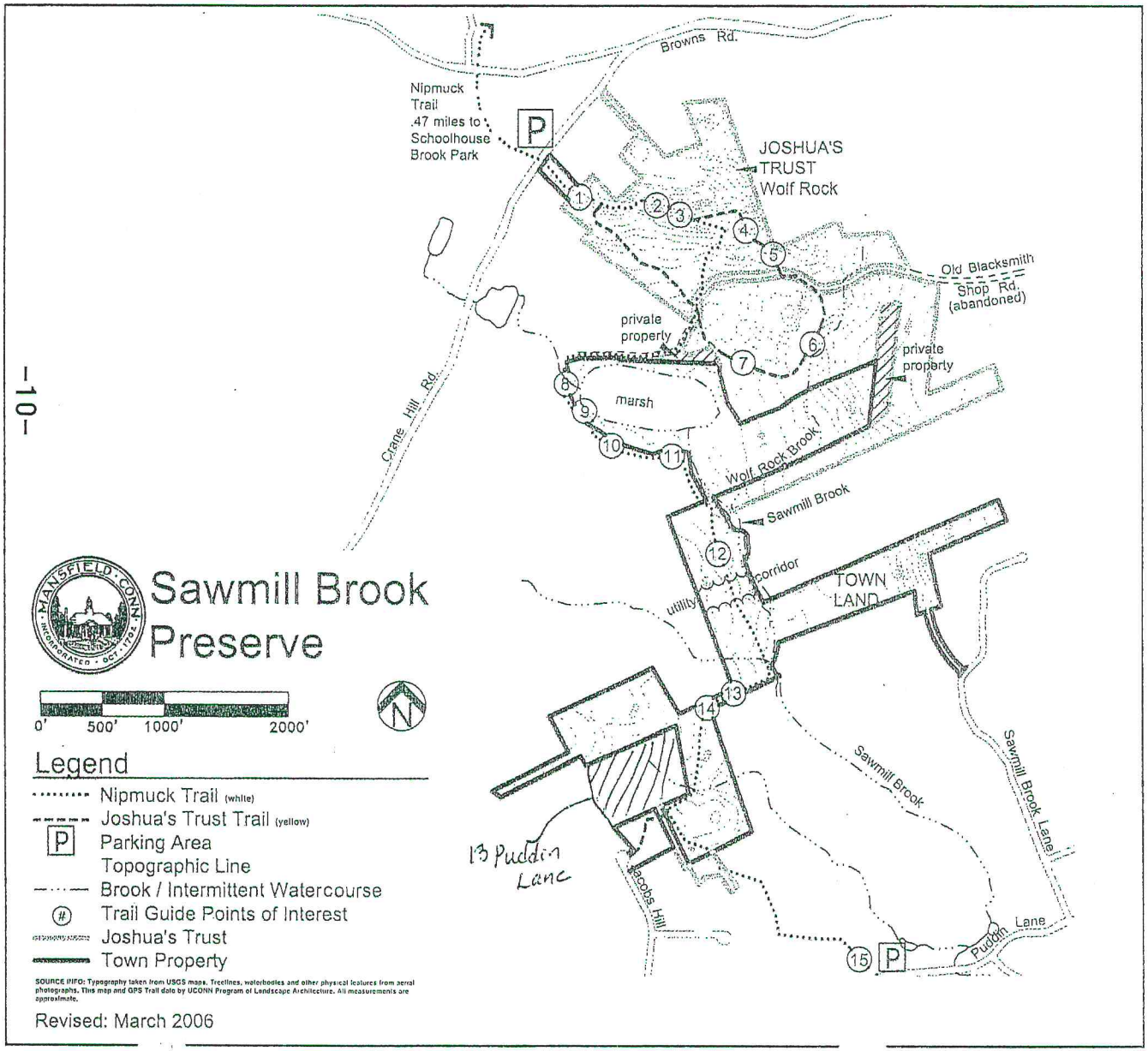
A well-worn trail begins on Town land at the end of Jacobs Hill Road and follows the south edge of the Stearns property to a junction with the Nipmuck Trail, which goes along the east edge. The Stearns property is part of the viewshed from these trails, and it provides a buffer from an adjoining house to the west. A loop trail may be possible on the Stearns property for further enjoyment of this scenic forest area.

RECOMMENDATION

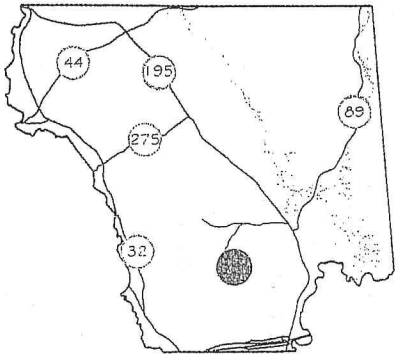
The committee recommends that the Town acquire this property to insure a continuous protected area in this interior forest and to provide a buffer for the Nipmuck and Town trails.

There is a total of 3 miles of blazed hiking trails within the Joshua's Trust and Town boundaries. The Nipmuck Trail (blazed in blue) and Joshua's Trust (blazed in yellow) wind through the following points of interest:

1. **Glacial Remains** - Signs of glacial activity are visibly scattered around the preserve. Many of the rocks were carried by the glacier from regions much farther north and were deposited here over 15,000 years ago.
2. **Wolf Rock** - Approximately 6 feet in diameter, this rock was left perched at the edge of a 40-foot cliff by the glaciers. Today it remains as one of Mansfield's most spectacular landmarks, mentioned in deeds dating back to the late 18th century.
3. **Scenic View** - As you look out south and east over the tree canopy from Wolf Rock, the views are breathtaking. Here the forested valley of Sawmill Brook can be seen, as well as the open fields on the brow of Crane Hill Field. In the distance is the campus of Eastern Connecticut State University.



4. **Rock Ledge** - During the descent down the trail, one of the preserve's many rock ledges can be seen. The bedrock exposed here is a variety of metamorphic rock called Willimantic Gneiss.
5. **Old Blacksmith Shop Road** - This abandoned road once connected Mansfield Center to the Crane Hill area.
6. **Riparian Vegetation** - While the trail winds along Wolf Rock Brook, take note of native water-tolerant vegetation growing here: skunk cabbage, ferns and birches. This palette of greenery will appear in many of the wet areas in the preserve.
7. **Hemlock Grove** - The dominant tree species here is the evergreen hemlock. While these trees are native, the species is currently threatened by a non-native insect called the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid.
8. **Invasive Plants** - As you cross over Sawmill Brook, notice the understory vegetation. These invasive species (barberry, multiflora rose, and bittersweet) were introduced as ornamental plants, and have since escaped from cultivated gardens into the wild, replacing native plants.
9. **Beaver Activity** - As the trail winds along the marsh's edge, note the pointed stumps. These are the remains of trees that were felled by beavers. The size of the marsh may be attributed to beaver damming.
10. **Marsh Views** - Sunny, treeless wetlands are called marshes. Phragmites, the tall 'wheat-like' grass seen at the far edge of the marsh, is a common invasive species of this wet environment.
11. **Wildlife View** - A view opens when the trail rounds the end of the marsh. Approach quietly and you may spot a Great Blue Heron.
12. **Utility Corridor** - This area is cleared for power lines and reveals the profile of Sawmill Brook valley, as the land slopes down to the brook, then steeply up the other side to Beech Mountain.
13. **Upland Hardwoods** - As the trail makes a gradual climb, notice the change in tree species. Hardwoods such as oak, beech and maple dominate the forest here.
14. **Old Stone Wall** - In most forests in New England it is common to find spans of old stonewalls used to contain grazing animals and property boundaries.
15. **Nipmuck Trail** - The blue-blazed Nipmuck Trail extends 37-miles from Union, Connecticut to Mansfield Hollow State Park and connects many of Mansfield's town parks. The Nipmuck trail is maintained by the Connecticut Forest and Parks Association.



DIRECTIONS

From the intersection of Route 89 and Route 195, head north on Route 195 for .03 miles. Turn left onto Browns Road. Go .83 miles and turn left onto Crane Hill Road. Go .2 miles to Wolf Rock Parking Area; parking is on right.

Suggested Park Activities

- Hiking
- Picnicking

Prohibited Park Activities

Unleashed Dogs
Mountain / Motor Biking
Camping / Camp Fires
Horseback Riding

Mansfield Parks & Recreation

10 South Eagleville Road, Mansfield CT 06268
860 429-3015 • fax 860 429-9773
www.mansfieldct.org/parksandpreserves/

Made possible thr[illegible] grant from the National Recreational Trails Program, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection

US Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

For up-to-date trail information or to download maps click on www.mansfieldct.org/trailguides/

Sawmill Brook Preserve

Mansfield, CT

Sawmill Brook Preserve is adjacent to Joshua's Trust's Wolf Rock Preserve. Together, the properties are a total of 188-acres. The Nipmuck Trail extends through these forested preserves from the Wolf Rock entrance on Crane Hill Road to Puddin Lane. The trail ascends easily to Wolf Rock Cliff, and then descends steeply to follow Old Blacksmith Shop Road across Sawmill Brook then south along the stream valley.

J. LISTING OF SIGNIFICANT CONSERVATION AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES

The following listing is intended to identify locations and/or streambelts/greenways which have significance with respect to conservation and wildlife resources in Mansfield. The listing is not intended to suggest priorities.

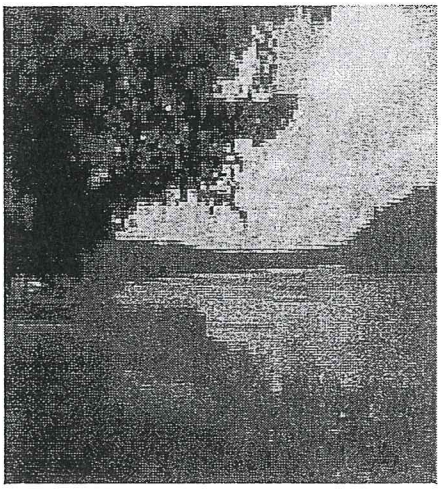
NATURAL DIVERSITY RESOURCES

- Locations depicted in the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection Agency's Natural Diversity Data Base mapping (see Map 11 of this Plan)

WATER RESOURCES (Surface and Groundwater)

- The Willimantic River Valley Greenway from the Willington town line to the Windham town line, including Eagleville Lake, an important stratified drift aquifer associated with UConn well fields north of Route 44 and west of Route 32 and tributary streams;
- Weaver Brook streambelt, which bisects the University of Connecticut's Depot Campus and enters the north end of Eagleville Lake;
- Cedar Swamp Brook streambelt, which flows from Cedar Swamp (a large, important swamp extending north into Willington and south across Rt. 195 into Mansfield) joining Nelson Brook and ultimately entering the north end of Eagleville Lake. Cedar Swamp itself, scenic falls, old dams, ledges, Pink Ravine Pond and Pink Ravine are all features of this streambelt system.
- Nelson Brook streambelt, which enters Mansfield from Willington and joins Cedar Swamp Brook at Shelter Falls Park. Two of its tributaries drain unusual wetlands. The first, a unique perched oligotrophic pitch pine-blueberry bog, lies just north of Rt. 195 and west of Tony's Garage. The second is roughly 100 acres of wetlands and glacial ridges. This parcel is nearly surrounded by residential development on Cedar Swamp Rd., Rt. 195, Baxter Rd. and Rt. 44. Another significant wetland, made up mainly of a dwarfed maple swamp, accompanies Nelson Brook from northwest of its crossing of Rt. 44 to its crossing with Birch Rd.
- Eagleville Brook streambelt, including a tributary stream north of S. Eagleville Road;
- Dunham Brook streambelt, including Dunham Pond and associated upland wetlands and tributary streams;
- Cider Mill Brook streambelt, including Coutu Pond and tributary streams;
- The Fenton River Valley streambelt, including associated stratified drift aquifer areas, adjacent meadows, ledges, hillsides and tributary streams;
- Fishers Brook streambelt, including "Codfish Falls" and tributary streams;
- Gurleyville (Valentine) Brook streambelt, including Valentine Meadow, the Horsebarn Hill drumlin, adjacent University of Connecticut agricultural land and tributary streams;

- Tift Pond and the Albert E. Moss Sanctuary south of Route 275, west of Rt. 195 and north of Birchwood Heights Road;
- Hanks (Hitchcock) Pond and associated streambelt areas;
- Bradley Brook streambelt, including Hansen's Pond and tributary streams to both Bradley Brook and Hansen's Pond;
- Schoolhouse Brook streambelt, including Bicentennial Pond, Schoolhouse Brook Park, Chapins Pond and tributary streams;
- The Mount Hope River Valley streambelt, including associated stratified drift aquifer areas, hillsides, identified potholes and tributary streams;
- Knowlton Pond, Leander Pond and McLaughlin Pond and the streambelt areas between these ponds;
- The Mansfield Hollow Reservoir (Naubesatuck Lake) and associated flood plain and stratified drift aquifer areas;
- Echo Lake, Eaton Bog and associated stratified drift aquifer and streambelt areas;
- The Natchaug River Valley streambelt, including the Willimantic Reservoir;
- Kidder-Sawmill Brook streambelts, including a significant white cedar swamp between Maple Road and Mansfield City Road that is on State DEP priority lists; Wolf Rock, east of Crane Hill Road, a significant forest area south of Browns Road, east of Crane Hill Road, north of Puddin Lane and west of Route 195, and tributary streams;
- Conantville Brook streambelt, including associated stratified drift aquifer areas and tributary streams;



The Mansfield Hollow Reservoir Falls

AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

- Agricultural land in southwestern Mansfield, hillside vistas extending from Browns Road through Pleasant Valley Road and along Mansfield City and Crane Hill Roads;
- Agricultural land located along Rt. 32 north and south of Route 44. Important natural features and scenic beauty make this area significant.
- Agricultural land east and west of Route 195 behind Mansfield Supply and in the Horsebarn Hill area;
- Prime agricultural soils and agricultural soils of State-wide significance within active farming areas;
- Interior forest tracts as identified on Map #21 of this Plan

GEORGRAPHY AND EARTH RESOURCES

- Coney Rock and adjacent steeply-sloped and hillside areas north of Mulberry Road and east of Chaffeeville Road;
- Fifty-foot Cliff and adjacent steeply-sloped areas west of Chaffeeville Road

K. OPEN SPACE ACQUISITION PRIORITY CRITERIA

The following open space acquisition criteria, are provided to assist in the evaluation of potential sites for additional preserved open space. All open space acquisition decisions should be based on a comprehensive review of specific site characteristics, information contained or referenced in this Plan and information obtained through an active public notice and review process. The listed criteria are not weighted to help establish priorities, but in general, sites that address multiple primary categories or that would be of town-wide significance in addressing a goal or objective of this Plan would have a higher priority than sites that address fewer primary categories or do not have Townwide significance. It also is noted that land availability, acquisition costs and budgetary priorities will also significantly influence open space acquisition decisions.

1. Identified or specifically referenced as a potential conservation, preservation or recreational area within Mansfield's Plan of Conservation and Development, the WINCOG Regional Land Use Plan or the Connecticut Policies Plan for Conservation and Development
   - Identified as a potential conservation area on Map 21
   - Identified as within one of Mansfield's significant conservation and wildlife resource areas in Appendix J
2. Conserves or preserves historic or archaeological resources
   - Site is located within or adjacent to a Plan-identified village area (see Map #5)
   - Site contains historic structures, sites or features including, but not limited to mill sites, cemeteries, foundations, stone walls (see Map 2)
   - Site is a recorded archaeological site
3. Conserves, preserves or protects notable wildlife habitats and/or plant communities
   - Site includes species listed by State or Federal agencies as endangered, threatened or of special concern (see Map #11 for DEP Natural Diversity Data Base data)
   - Site contains or helps protect vernal pools, marshes, cedar swamps, grasslands, waterbodies or other notable plant or animal habitats
   - Site is within a designated large contiguous interior forest area (see Map #11)
   - Site includes a diversity of habitats
4. Conserves, preserves or protects important surface or groundwater resources
   - Site is located within or proximate to a State-designated wellfield aquifer area, potential stratified drift wellfield area or existing public water supply well
   - Site is proximate to the Willimantic Reservoir or tributary watercourses and waterbodies
   - Site contains or is adjacent to significant wetlands, watercourses or waterbodies and acquisition will significantly help to protect the water resource
   - Site contains a flood hazard area
5. Conserves, preserves or protects agricultural or forestry land
   - Site contains prime agricultural soils or agricultural soils of State-wide significance, (particularly important when in association with an existing agricultural use)

- Site is located within an existing agricultural area such as the area in southwestern Mansfield along Mansfield City Road, Stearns Road, Browns Road, Crane Hill Road and Pleasant Valley Road
- Site contains prime forestry soils (particularly important when located within a large contiguous interior forest area or within a site implementing a long-term forest management plan)
- Site would provide a significant buffer for an existing agricultural use

6. Conserves, preserves or protects important scenic resources
   - Site contains scenic overlooks, ridgelines, open fields, meadows, river valleys and other areas or features of particular scenic importance. (Information contained on Map 12 should be utilized in considering relative scenic importance.)
   - Site contains significant roadside features such as specimen trees and noteworthy stone walls
   - Site abuts a Town-designated Scenic Road
   - Site is visible from existing roadways, trails and/or readily accessible public spaces
   - Site contributes to the scenic quality of one of Mansfield's historic village areas
7. Creates or enhances connections
   - Site is located along the Willimantic River, the Nipmuck Trail or other State-recognized greenway or a potential town-wide or multi-town greenway or trail system
   - Site would expand an existing park or preserved open space area and contribute to a continuous area of open space, protect a wildlife corridor, and/or provide a new trail access between open space properties or from existing roads or subdivisions to open space properties)
   - Site would provide a new linkage from an existing or proposed residential neighborhood to an open space/park area, school or commercial area
   - Site provides a buffer area for existing trails
8. Creates or enhances recreational opportunity
   - Site is physically suitable for future ballfields and other active recreational use
   - Site abuts an existing school, playground or active recreational site
   - Site provides new boating or fishing access to the Willimantic River or other significant watercourses or waterbodies
   - Site abuts or is within the watershed of existing outdoor public swimming site, such as Bicentennial Pond in Schoolhouse Brook Park
   - Site is located within or proximate to existing areas of higher-density/residential development

Planning, Acquisition, and Management Guidelines, Mansfield Open Space, Park, Recreation, Agricultural Properties and Conservation Easements

(Approved by Mansfield Town Council Nov. 13, 1995, revisions approved Aug. 25, 1997 and August 24, 2009)

Background

This document serves to guide the Town of Mansfield as it plans, acquires and manages the following:

- Open space, park, and recreation areas
- Agricultural properties
- Open space acquired as a result of subdivision, as appropriate
- Conservation easements

I Planning

A. The Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) has a statutory responsibility to periodically review and update the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), including open space, recreation and agricultural elements. Appendix J of the 2006 POCD contains a listing of Significant Conservation and Wildlife Resources. Appendix K contains the Open Space Acquisition Priority Criteria. These pertinent sections of the POCD are contained in **Attachment A.**

B. The Town Council, Conservation Commission, Agriculture Committee, Open Space Preservation Committee, Parks Advisory Committee, Recreation Advisory Committee, Historical Society, various staff members and the public shall directly assist the PZC with its review and updating of the POCD. Interim studies and reports shall be encouraged on specific areas of Town and on various aspects of local goals to promote recreational opportunities and to protect and enhance valuable natural, agricultural or historic resources.

C. The PZC and Inland Wetland Agency periodically shall review and update land use regulations to help implement community goals and objectives regarding the protection and enhancement of natural, agricultural, historic and recreational resources.

D. The Town Council shall consider on an annual basis the allocation of funds and taxation policies to help implement community goals regarding the protection and enhancement of natural, agricultural, historic and recreational resources.

II Acquisition

A. Planning and Zoning Commission/Inland Wetlands Agency (IWA)Application/Approval Process

The Town Manager is authorized to receive for the Town any open space/conservation easement acquisition approved by the PZC/IWA application process. However, in the event that the Town Council disagrees with PZC/IWA recommendation for the proposed acquisition, the Town Manager is not authorized to accept the acquisition without specific Town Council authorization.

Before acting however, the Town Council will provide PZC/IWA the opportunity to justify their recommendation.

1. The procedure for reviewing open space/conservation easement acquisitions associated with the PZC application/approval process is detailed below.

2. Proposed open space/conservation easements associated with the PZC application/approval process shall be referred for comment to the Open Space Preservation Committee, the Town Council, the Conservation Commission, and as appropriate, the Parks Advisory Committee, the Recreation Advisory Committee, and the Agriculture Committee.

3. Proposed open space/conservation easements associated with the PZC application/approval process shall be evaluated by taking into account site and neighborhood characteristics, the proposed development layout, natural, historic, cultural and scenic resource information, and priority criteria contained in Mansfield's POCD and regulatory provisions.

4. Comments from committees shall be forwarded to the PZC/IWA and the Town Council. As deemed necessary, the PZC/IWA and/or the Town Council may obtain expert advice to address management concerns and potential liabilities.

5. Any Town Council comments or recommendations, including any obtained expert advice, shall be forwarded to PZC/IWA in association with the application review process.

6. If a public hearing is held as part of the PZC/IWA application process, committee and Town Council comments shall be submitted prior to the close of the public hearing.

B .Other potential open space acquisitions

1. Step I-Committee Reviews

In response to a Town Council or staff referral or a committee initiative, the Open Space Preservation Committee shall conduct preliminary reviews of potential acquisitions and/or conservation easements. Potential acquisitions shall be evaluated based on resource information and priority criteria contained in Mansfield's POCD. As deemed appropriate, property owners shall be contacted, sites shall be visited and the Town's other land use commissions and committees shall be consulted. Available properties worthy of further consideration shall be referred to the Town Council with a background report. Said report shall identify important site characteristics and potential benefits. In addition, potential liabilities and management concerns, including anticipated maintenance and improvement costs, shall be noted.

2 Step II-Town Council Review

The Town Council shall review the Open Space Preservation Committee report, In instances where deemed necessary to maintain the confidentiality of the transaction, the Open Space Preservation Committee report shall be discussed inexecutive session. As deemed appropriate, the Town Council shall take a field trip to the site. Where multiple properties are being reviewed, the Town Council may schedule a meeting (in executive session when necessary) with the Open Space Preservation Committee to consider priorities.

3.. Step III-Negotiations, Grant Applications

After evaluation of site characteristics, potential benefits and management needs, the Town Council shall authorize the Town Manager to begin preliminary negotiations with property owners of land deemed suitable for further consideration. If appropriate, and if grant funds are available, the Town Manager shall direct staff to complete a grant application to subsidize the purchase of the identified property.

4. Step IV-Appraisals, Consultants

Depending on preliminary negotiations, the Town Council may authorize the Town Manager to hire a real estate appraiser to prepare an opinion of value or appraisal report for potential properties or portions of said property. In addition, the Town Council may authorize the Town Manager to retain other expert advice to inform the Council on other management concerns and/or potential liabilities.

5 Step V-Purchase Agreements

Subject to Town Council authorization, the Town Manager may negotiate and execute purchase agreements for potential acquisitions. Said purchase agreements shall be conditional upon final approval by the Town Council, following a Public Hearing. As appropriate, the Town Manager may utilize specialists, such as the Trust for Public Land, to negotiate and facilitate agreements.

6. Step VI-Public Hearing

The Town Council shall hold a Public Hearing to receive public comment regarding a proposed purchase. Prior to the Public Hearing, neighboring property owners shall be notified by staff and, in situations where a referral has not yet taken place, the proposed purchase shall be referred to the PZC pursuant to Section 8-24 C.G.S.

7.. Step VII-Town Council Vote

Following the Public Hearing, the Town Council shall vote on whether to acquire the subject property.

8 Step VIII-Property Preparation

After the Town Council votes to acquire the property, and before a management plan is approved, Town Staff, relevant committee members and other volunteers shall take appropriate

steps to prepare the property for Town ownership. These steps may include, but are not limited to:

- Gathering information from abutters regarding management issues/concerns
- Creating safe access
- Surveying land and marking boundaries, if appropriate
- Developing a map including boundary information, existing notable features such as trails, waterways, buildings and vistas

C. Sale of Town-owned Properties

In general, it is the Town's policy not to sell land or conservation restrictions acquired by the Town through purchase, donation or as a result of a PZC/IWA subdivision application process. In some instances, a deed restriction may prevent the Town from selling Town-owned land. In the unusual instances where Town lands and easements may be transferred to private ownership, clear benefit to the Town must be demonstrated. In these instances, the Town Council shall refer the property to PZC pursuant to Section 8-24 of the Connecticut General Statues, and hold a Public Hearing to receive public comment regarding the proposed sale. In addition, staff shall notify neighboring property owners of the proposed sale.

D. Leasing of Town-owned Properties

1. **Agricultural Land**

The policy goals of the Town 2006 POCD encourage sustainable agricultural land use, and the conservation and preservation of Mansfield's agricultural resources (p.4). For this reason, when the Town acquires farmland or land with prime agriculture soils, it is Town policy that this land be actively farmed. When the Town initiates an agricultural lease of Town property, there shall be a formal "Request for Agricultural Services." The Town shall publish a legal notice requesting sealed proposals no less than 10 days prior to the date the proposals are due. The Town Manager, with advice from the Agriculture Committee, shall be responsible for selecting the services rendered and for monitoring the leases. A sample lease for Town-owned agricultural land is contained as **Attachment B.**

2. **Other Land**

In instances where an individual requests to lease Town-owned property, this request shall be referred to the Open Space Preservation Committee and any other relevant committee to review. In general, it is the Town's policy to lease only Town-owned agricultural lands. In the rare instance when the Town agrees to lease other Town-owned land to a private party, clear benefit to the Town must be demonstrated. In these instances, the Town Council shall refer the property to PZC pursuant to Section 8-24 of the Connecticut General Statues, and hold a Public Hearing to receive public comment regarding the proposed lease. In addition, staff shall notify neighboring property owners of the proposed lease.

III Managing Town Parks, Preserves, Open Space and Agricultural Land

A. Step I-Management Plan Assignments

The Town Manager, with the advice of committees and Town staff, shall assign the support role of a draft management plan to the appropriate Town staff, with input from appropriate committees.

As a general rule, the preparation of a draft management plan shall be a coordinated effort involving the Conservation Commission, Agriculture Committee, Parks Advisory Committee, Recreation Advisory Committee, Open Space Preservation Committee, Town staff, and, as appropriate, the PZC, Inland Wetland Agency and Beautification Committee. Responsibility for preparing a written draft management plan will be as follows:

1) The Conservation Commission shall provide input for draft management plans for undeveloped open space areas;

2) The Agriculture Committee shall provide input for draft management plans for properties with existing or proposed agricultural or horticultural uses;

3) The Parks Advisory Committee shall provide input for draft management plans for existing or proposed park areas with trails, community gardens or other recreational facilities;

4) The Recreation Advisory Committee shall provide input for draft management plans for properties with existing or proposed playgrounds or athletic fields.

5) The Open Space Preservation Committee shall provide input for draft management plans for properties with special characteristics reviewed during the acquisition process.

B. Step II-Drafting the Management Plan

1) Format

Management plans shall be prepared utilizing the general format contained in **Attachment C**. Each plan shall summarize the information gathered and presented during the acquisition process. In addition, the management plan shall document important site characteristics, concerns, and goals for the use of the property as well as recommended management and monitoring actions.

2) Invasive Species

Pursuant to Mansfield's Non-Native Invasive Species Policy (included as **Attachment D**) adopted on the staff level after briefing the Town Council at their 11/22/04 meeting, management plans shall include the development and implementation of an invasives control plan and prohibit the use of species banned by Public Act 04-203 of the State of Connecticut, with any subsequent revisions.

3) Fiscal Notes and Budget Considerations

Fiscal notes estimating the costs associated with managing the property shall be included as an attachment to the management plan. These fiscal notes shall serve to guide the Town Council and committee members as to ***estimated*** projected costs associated with implementing the management plan. More precise cost estimates shall be prepared annually for budget consideration by the Town Manager and Town Council as part of the annual Capitol Improvement Budget. When available, sources of grant assistance shall be investigated and

grant applications shall be prepared by staff to implement goals and objectives stated in the management plan.

4) Naming the Property

The proposed name of the property shall be included in the draft management plan. In general, the Town of Mansfield shall name properties after a significant natural or historic feature. In some instances, it shall be deemed appropriate by the advisory committees, the Town Council, the PZC or staff to name a property in a different manner. Naming of properties after a person shall be limited to those properties that have been donated to the Town or made a specific condition of acquisition. In all cases, the Town Council, with advice from advisory committees and the PZC, shall make the final decision regarding the name of the property.

C. Step III-Staff and Committee Review

Staff shall provide comment and circulate the draft management plan to appropriate committees for final review before an abutters' review and public comment.

D. Step IV-Abutters' Review

After the preparation of a draft management plan or significant changes in a plan, the responsible staff member or committee member shall notify abutting property owners and schedule an abutters' meeting to provide opportunity for neighborhood comment.

E. Step V-Town Council Review

The Town Council shall review draft management plans or significant changes in a plan and, as deemed appropriate obtain additional information from the Town's various land use commissions/committees and staff. The Town Council may choose to hold a Public Hearing to receive public input to the plan.

F. Step VI-Town Council Approval

The Town Council shall approve a new management plan or significant changes to an existing plan for Town-owned properties.

G. Step VII-Implementation

Implementing management plans shall be a coordinated effort among Town staff, advisory committee members, and volunteer stewards. Implementation shall be coordinated through the Parks and Recreation Department but may include staff from various other Town departments including the Department of Public Works, Planning Department, etc.

Plan implementation may include but will not be limited to:

- Structural improvements for public access and safety (such as establishing a parking area, constructing trails, improving wheelchair accessibility)

- Ecological management (such as inventorying natural resources, managing and controlling invasive species, encouraging native habitats, improving wildlife habitat)
- Maintenance of parking areas, signage, and boundary markers
- Monitoring of plan goals and objectives to ensure effective implementation
- Public outreach including public information and interpretive guides and maps, and use for education and research

H. Step VIII-Monitoring

Site conditions, including any new improvements, shall be monitored in accordance with the schedule established in the approved management plan by staff or appropriate volunteers. Any problems or issues uncovered shall be reviewed by staff and the commission /committee members that assisted in the preparation of the management plan. As appropriate, problems or issues shall be referred to the Town Council.

I. Step IX-Management Plan Update

The management plan(s) shall be updated as per the approved schedule or as often as deemed necessary by the Town Council or by the commissions/committees.

IV Management of Conservation or Agricultural Easements

A specific management plan is not needed for conservation or agricultural easements unless public access, trails or other municipal interests not adequately addressed in the easement are involved. If a management plan is appropriate, a draft shall be prepared, using the steps detailed in Section III of these guidelines. The Conservation Commission, with staff assistance, shall be responsible for periodically monitoring Mansfield's existing Conservation Easements. **Attachment E** contains a Conservation Easement Abstract and Monitoring/Inspection Form. The Agriculture Committee, with staff assistance, shall be responsible for periodically monitoring any agricultural easements.

Problems or issues uncovered shall be reviewed with staff. As appropriate, problems or issues shall be referred to the Town Council, PZC, or Inland Wetland Agency, depending on the specific easement document.

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