

PUBLIC HEARING  
TOWN OF MANSFIELD  
November 14, 2016

The Mansfield Town Council will hold a public hearing at 7:00 PM at their regular meeting on November 14, 2016 to solicit public comment regarding the proposed acquisition of development rights on 48.3 acres located on 474, 504, and 519 Mansfield City Road.

At this hearing persons may address the Town Council and written communications may be received. Information regarding the program is on file and available at the Town Clerk's office: 4 South Eagleville Road, Mansfield and is posted on the Town's website ([mansfieldct.gov](http://mansfieldct.gov)).

Dated at Mansfield Connecticut this 3rd day of November, 2016.

Mary Stanton, Town Clerk



**Town of Mansfield  
Agenda Item Summary**

**To:** Town Council  
**From:** Matt Hart, Town Manager *MWH*  
**CC:** Maria Capriola, Assistant Town Manager; Jennifer Kaufman, Environmental Planner; Linda Painter, Director of Planning and Development; Curt Vincente, Director of Parks and Recreation  
**Date:** October 24, 2016  
**Re:** Acquisition of Development Rights on 48.3 acres located on 474, 504, and 519 Mansfield City Road (Mountain Dairy Farm IV)

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**Subject Matter/Background**

In 2014, the Town entered into a cooperative agreement with the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) to investigate the purchase the development rights on 474, 504, and 519 Mansfield City Road, also known as Farm IV, owned by Willard J Stearns and Sons, LLC. (Mountain Dairy). The ACEP program is a cost share program whereby USDA NRCS works with towns and land trusts to contribute 50% of the appraised value of the development rights. Through this program, an agricultural conservation easement is placed on the land, permanently restricting residential, industrial, and non-agricultural commercial development. The farm would continue to be owned by Mountain Dairy and property taxes would continue to be collected.

The total area of the parcels is 57.6 acres. A two-acre parcel on the east side and a seven-acre parcel on the west side, have been excluded from the agricultural conservation restriction. These parcels can be sold by Mountain Dairy or subsequent owners as separate lots that would no longer be associated with the farm. A 4.4-acre "farmstead envelope" would stay with the remaining farm but the owners could make improvements to the house or develop buildings for agricultural uses. All of the improvements would be clearly articulated in the conservation easement that is placed on the property. In total, 48.3 acres of the two parcels would be restricted under the program.

This property is located in the largest area of prime agricultural soils and active farmland in Mansfield (more than 1,000 acres, over 900 acres of which are or soon to be permanently preserved). The property has 22 +/- acres of prime agricultural soils (per USDA soil scientist's report). Most of the prime acreage is in production for dairy support (hay and silage corn). A small area near the east boundary is being cleared to complete the cropland area. There is a 19<sup>th</sup> century house, a trailer, and various

Attachments

- 1) A-2 Survey ([www.mansfieldct.org/MtnDairyFarmIV](http://www.mansfieldct.org/MtnDairyFarmIV))
- 2) Agriculture Committee Comments
- 3) Open Space Preservation Committee Comments
- 4) Maps

## OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

### Recommendation concerning acquisition of development rights to the Stearns property on Mansfield City Road

September 16, 2014

To: Mansfield Town Council, Town Manager

At the Open Space Preservation Committee's September 16, 2014 meeting, the committee reviewed in executive session a 59-acre property on both sides of Mansfield City Road. Willard J. Stearns and Sons, Inc. is offering to sell development rights to the agricultural portion of this property to the Town. The Open Space Preservation Committee reviewed this property with reference to its location and to criteria in the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). Committee members visited the property on September 7, 2014 during an Agriculture Committee field trip.

#### DESCRIPTION

The property has two parcels. The east parcel (19 acres) contains houses and farm outbuildings, as well as hay and corn fields sloping to the east. There is a seasonal brook crossing the property near the east boundary. The west parcel (40 acres) has a hay field, woodlands and some small wetlands. On the west boundary, it abuts Joshua's Trust's Goodwin Preserve

#### CRITERIA IN APPENDIX K of POCD

##### *1. A Significant Conservation and Wildlife Resource*

The parcel is part of a large agricultural area in southwest Mansfield, and it has prime agricultural soils in an active farming area (see Appendix J).

##### *5. Conserves important agricultural land*

- 22 acres of prime agricultural soils, all of which are being used to grow hay and corn by Mt. Dairy
- Property is located in the Town's largest agricultural area (see POCD Map 11)

##### *6. Conserves scenic resource*

Property offers scenic views of fields from the roadside in a Viewshed Class II area (see POCD Map 2)

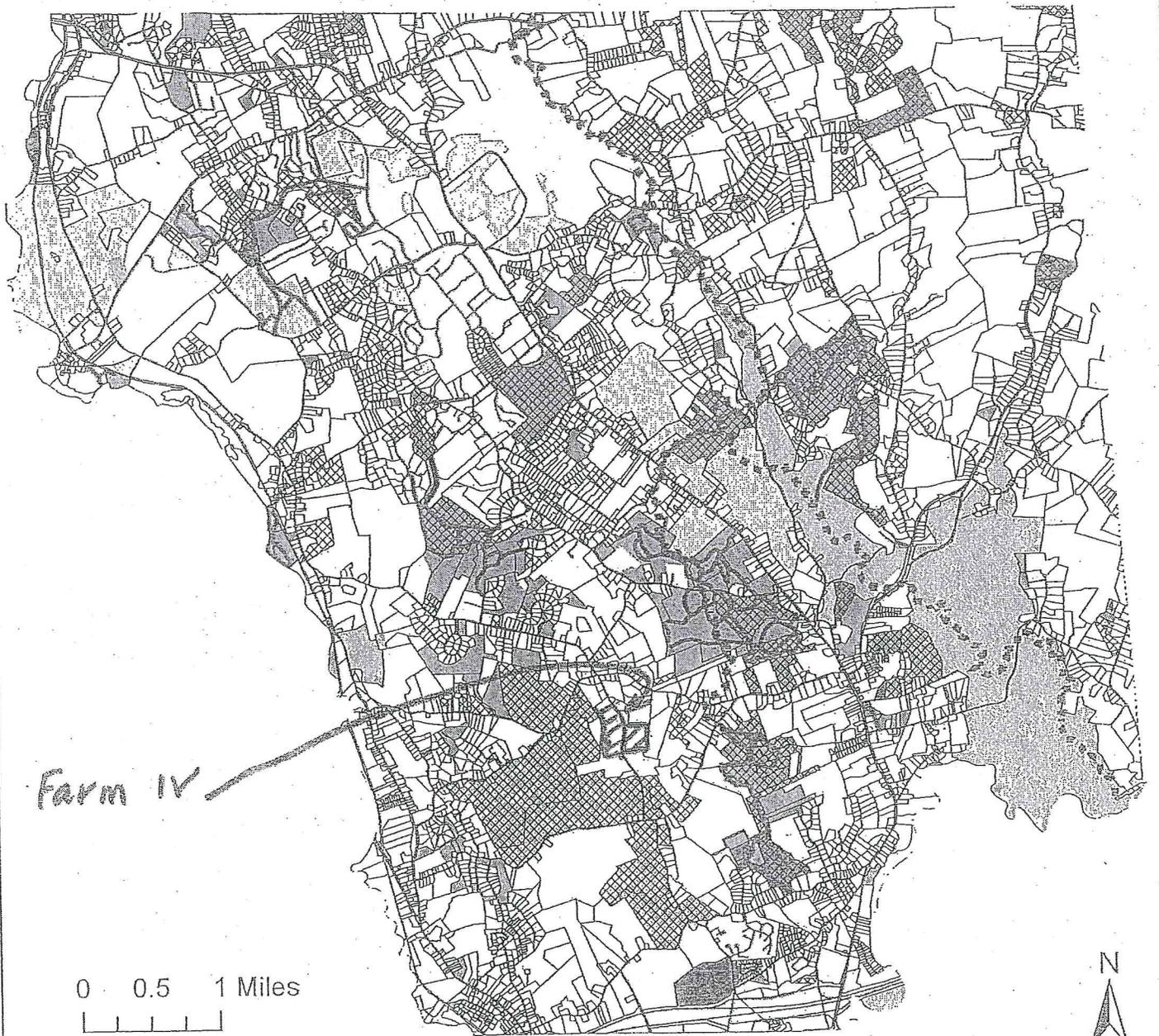
##### *7. Creates or Enhances Connections* Site would expand preserved protected open space areas:

- Expands area of preserved farmland from Twin Ponds Farm (See POCD map 20)
- Expands area of preserved woodland from Goodwin Preserve (See POCD map 20)

#### RECOMMENDATION

The committee supports Town acquisition of development rights to the undeveloped land on the Stearns property to expand protected areas of farmland and woodland.

# Mansfield Public and Protected Open Space



## Legend

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|  Town Trails                      |  Joshua's Trust                       |
|  Nipmuck Trail                    |  Joshua's Trust Conservation Easement |
|  Parcels                          |  Agriculture Easement                 |
|  Permanently Protected Open Space |  Federal                              |
|  Mansfield                        |  State                                |
|  Mansfield Conservation Easement  |  University Managed Resource Area     |

