

SUPPORT ARTICLES 22 AND 26

A JOINT EFFORT IN

OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION

The Conservation Commission (ConCom) and Harvard Conservation Trust (HCT) have been working together over the past year to preserve an important parcel of land in Still River.

The parcel abuts critical wetlands within the watershed of Bare Hill Pond. Both wetlands and watersheds assist in the protection of ground water, which is significant to the majority of Harvard residents. The development of this 23[±]-acre parcel could increase runoff and non-point source pollution to Bare Hill Pond, thereby affecting water quality. Additionally, preservation of the parcel will provide connectivity to an important wildlife corridor and assist in maintaining biodiversity in Harvard. This last parcel will complete the link connecting other preserved lands and create a 400-acre area of interconnected open space.

HCT would initially purchase the entire 23[±]-acre parcel, market a 5[±]-acre parcel as a building lot to assist in financing the purchase, and then sell the remaining 18[±]-acres to the Town, under the management of the ConCom, at a sale price of \$200,000, well below market value. HCT has also agreed to pay all carrying costs and engineering fees associated with the transactions.

Your help is needed to be sure Article 22, item 4 and Article 26, item 6 are acted upon favorably at town meeting in order for this project to move forward. The development of this parcel into four house lots would disconnect the existing trail system and eliminate the potential of any future trail linkages between the two large blocks of conservation land to the north and south.

These articles are supported by the Bare Hill Pond Watershed Management Committee, Harvard Snowmobile Club and are recommended by the Finance Committee and the Capital Planning and Investment Committee.

Open Space Protection Project – Willard Lane

Project Description

- ❖ 23.3 acres of undeveloped land along Willard Lane
- ❖ Borders ~400 acres of existing protected open space
- ❖ Protects a 40 acre wetland buffer for Bare Hill Pond
- ❖ Contains a heavily used private trail which links other open space
- ❖ Part of an important wildlife corridor
- ❖ Conceptual plan for a four lot subdivision

Why protect this land?

- ❖ It is a key in maintaining the wildlife and recreation corridor in a "permanently protected condition". A new private owner or developer may not be willing to allow access for trails across this key connecting piece.
- ❖ This parcel expands and connects other preserved lands thus creating a larger ecological habitat. One large parcel is much more significant than smaller unconnected parcels.
- ❖ The parcel, if permanently protected, creates an important buffer in the Bare Hill Pond Watershed.
- ❖ It directly addresses several of the Goals of the 2016 Open Space and Recreation Plan:
 - Goal 4: Protect Bare Hill Pond as an important shared resource.
 - Goal 5: Provide an interconnected trail network and walkways
 - Goal 8: Protect groundwater and wetlands
 - Goal 9: Protect native plant and animal species
 - Action Item 9a: Create wildlife corridors

Proposed Project Funding

- ❖ Joint project of the Conservation Commission and the Harvard Conservation Trust (HCT); HCT's Board has approved pursuing a potential deal
- ❖ HCT would purchase the property, sell a single 5 +/- acre trade lot, and sell the remaining 18 +/- acre parcel to the Town for \$200,000
- ❖ HCT is currently in negotiations with the seller, and with a potential buyer for the trade lot
- ❖ Funding requested by the Conservation Commission from CPC and from CPIC has been recommended pending approval at Town Meeting.