



Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition, Inc.
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2018 Member/Steering Committee Meeting

MINUTES

Thursday, December 13, 2018

Brigham Hill Community Farm Barn

37 Wheeler Road, North Grafton, MA 01536

Handouts:

- Minutes of September 28, 2018 Steering Committee Meeting (massland.org member's section)
- Steering Committee Meeting Agenda
- Statewide Land Conservation Plan idea list from Land Trust/State Agency Retreat

Attendees: On record at MLTC office. Virtual participants: Kate Bowditch, Essex County Greenbelt; David Viale, Massachusetts Dept. of Agricultural Resources; Reggie Hall, Conservation Fund; Janet Morrison, Barnstable Land Trust

10:00 Call to Order– Kathy Orlando, Steering Committee Chair

1. **Introductions from all attendees.** Welcome and Introductions.
2. **Review of Minutes of 9/28/18 MLTC SC minutes.** (available to members at <http://massland.org/steering-committee>) Anna Wilkins moved and Henry Woolsey seconded the motion to accept the minutes. **VOTE:** Accepted unanimously with one abstention due to absence at last meeting (Rita Grossman).
3. **2019 Steering Committee Topics.** Carolyn Sedgwick, MLTC ED, requested ideas for workshop topics and the following were proposed:
 - a. Management of invasive species in consideration of local town conservation bylaws and municipal procedural and legal constraints. Provide legal references and stewardship models for removal of “nuisance” species. Other stewardship concerns including dogs, cycling, etc. were also proposed.
 - b. Marketing and communications training to identify best practices for engaging the public.
 - c. Best practices and models for doing PILOT agreements.
 - d. With a focus on rural communities especially in Central and Western MA: How to get CPA passed, sources of grant funding and best practices to engage this demographic.
 - e. Cost of community services at the municipal level. It was noted that Paul Catanzaro, UMass Extension, is studying the cost of community services. American Farmland Trust has a model.
 - f. Review of key legal decisions: Hawley vs. NEFF case; 1969 Parkinson vs. Medfield case to acknowledge CR impact on property taxes; Weston Forest & Trail Association, INC. vs. Fishman ruling in favor of conservation restriction.
 - g. Carbon Tax Credits: how they work and note the experience of MA municipalities that have entered this market as a source of revenue. It was noted that this was a topic at the Regional Conservation Partnership Conference in Amherst, MA, on Nov. 15th.
 - h. Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program and climate adaptation management planning: How to engage the Executive Office of Energy & the Environment to get conservation as part of this initiative. Identify methods to incentivize.
 - i. Management and stewardship in context of climate change.
 - j. Food sovereignty and food safety. Consideration of stewardship of agricultural lands. Link Massachusetts Department of Agriculture (DAR) Food Policy Council (Winton Pitkoff).Kathy asked for everyone to contact Carolyn and Buzz with additional ideas.

4. Mass Land Trust Coalition (MassLand) Update

- a. Carolyn Sedgwick summarized the Land Trust / State Agency retreat a success. She thanked both Bob Wilber and Bob O'Connor for their time.
- b. One idea that emerged at the LT/State agency retreat was to renew the statewide conservation plan and goals for the next ten years. John Gioia, Dept. Conservation Services, Conservation Restriction Reviewer, endorsed the topic and noted Bob O'Connor's desire it be prioritized. Rob Warren said the last one took two years to complete and 1 million acres were identified for conservation. Criteria and guidelines would be needed for this update. Original objective was to identify priority locations and provide a common framework for advocacy and funding. John Gioia updated the results of the brainstorm session done at the retreat and the list was distributed. Main themes included focusing on resiliency and climate change; how land conservation can support human needs in addition to nature's needs (water supply; food; public health) and how plan can accommodate non-conservation goals. Discussion ensued and the following suggestions were identified:
 - i. Planning process should identify the intended audience; clearly state why identified land should be conserved and for what purpose; identify conservation values from both human and nature perspective; have a two-stage mapping process.
 - ii. Identify how many LTs have plans already and consider starting with these and the differences between rural areas, suburban and coastal were noted.
 - iii. Reinvigorate statewide, a conference similar to one held by the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership to identify for regional conservation opportunities.
 - iv. Kathy Orlando noted that 15 years ago there was funding for this type of planning process and Buzz Constable noted that MLTC is ideally positioned to work with the EEA on this as well as revisiting the goals for the outcome (cost of community services; climate change impact on habitat; urban open space; etc.) and to integrate MVPP process to identify strategic land for flood or drought preparation.
 - v. Planning process should be done in different parts of the state.
 - vi. Mark Robinson questioned whether the EEA has staffing resources to work on this and emphasized that the reasons, the "why", for protection would need to be stated clearly for identified land. Success would be more funding for land acquisitions.
 - vii. Irene Del Bono emphasized the value of statewide approach including the effectiveness for reaching state legislators and the voters; getting parties to understand the value of conservation for water quality and quantity; the need for overlays.
 - viii. Rita Grossman suggested the usefulness of case studies of what hasn't worked and to have examples that demonstrate the consequences of no protection: issues with water; habitat loss on species, and consequences, flooding, etc.
 - ix. It was suggested to include the Mass Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC) and Agricultural Commissions; the Community Preservation Coalition; the Regional Conservation Partnership and their model; Harvard Forest (especially their narrative on scenario work and funding sources) and Mike Kennealy, Massachusetts Secretary of Housing and Economic Development for jobs; tourism and value of open space.
 - x. Please provide your ideas and feedback to Carolyn and Buzz.
- c. **Mass Land Conservation Conference (MLCC) update:** March 23rd: Enhancing Community Through the Land.
 - i. Program is finalized. Gina McCarthy will be the keynote speaker and Carolyn thanked Henry Woolsey for his assistance.
 - ii. A request was made for each land trust would find at least one sponsor.
 - iii. Carolyn noted that past sponsors are listed on the MLTC website.

- d. **Record keeping program.** MLTC working with the Land Trust Alliance on guidelines and a best practices program for LTs on record keeping. LTs can request to be a participant at a cost of approximately \$30 per property file.
- e. **Young Land Professionals:** John Gioia (EEA) speaking as a member said the last meeting was a success and the Wildlands Trust was thanked for hosting. The next event will be hosted by SVT (Sudbury Valley Trustees) in January.
- f. **MLTC Annual Meeting.** March 1, 2019. Location TBD.

5. State Agency Update.

- a. John Gioia noted that a State-wide land conservation plan update will be discussed.
- b. This past year, 145 CRs protecting 3800 acres have been completed. Of the 145, 90 CRs grant public access in some way.
- c. Currently, approximately \$20.5M in Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds have supported conservation.
- d. The Conservation Land Tax Credit (CLTC) program is fully obligated for 2019, but, funding is available for 2020.
- e. Melissa Cryan said that the grant award (LAND, Conservation Partnership; PARC) announcements should be made soon. Drinking water supply Protection Grants Program should be announced in early 2019. She also noted that only 2 landscape partnership grants were eligible for funding;
- f. Mark Robinson suggested that the grant applications should be general and qualify for multiple grant programs to balance request load. Melissa Cryan noted that this would not work for small towns and land trusts run by volunteers in applying for grants.
- g. Rich Hubbard asked for seed money for upfront costs (appraisals, staff time, etc.) for preparation for Landscape Partnership Grants. Melissa Ryan also mentioned the Conservation Assistance for Small Communities Grant Program.
- h. Buzz Constable requested that the MLTC newsletter (Enews) continue to advertise the grants and include the timelines. Carolyn Sedgwick concurred and will continue to include grants in the Enews. The open rate for the ENews is double than national average and has been an efficient way for communicating updates to members and partners.
- i. Kathy Orlando asked about being able to have flexibility on or to re-consider the Landscape Partnership Grant program criteria of not having a road fragmenting the project, since some roads don't actually act as a barrier to wildlife connectivity and movement.

6. 11:35 Workgroup and Subcommittee Updates

- a. The commonwealth's Agricultural Land Preservation Committee is meeting and reviewing pending legislation. Kathy Orlando asked everyone to reach out to their legislator to request a year's extension to the Department of Agriculture (DAR) review timeline for Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR) due to all the requirements and components.
- b. The Farm Bill passed on December 12th and increases the total funding for the Agriculture Conservation Easement Program to \$450 million per year. The conservation community's goal is \$500M. The Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition and 185 other organizations signed onto a letter to Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader Pelosi in December thanking the Farm Bill Conferees and the Chairs and Ranking Members of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees for reaching an agreement on the Farm Bill and to encouraging timely passage.

7. **Keynote Presentation: Impacts of permanent protection of private lands on forest loss and development in Massachusetts—Christoph Nolte, Assistant Professor, Boston University Department of Earth & Environment (E-slide presentation attached)**
 - a. Impacts and Cost-effectiveness of Conservation Interventions. This presentation summarized a paper currently under peer review for publication.
 - b. Mr. Nolte mentioned that the MLCC was the largest state conference in the U.S. and that the relatively large, active conservation community in Massachusetts made the state a good venue for this research.
 - c. Developed Private Land Conservation Evidence System (PLACES) for research themes of cost, allocation and impact. Using thirty years of data, PLACES has developed a system of analysis for MA and CO looking at the impact of private land conservation.
 - d. Data on Impact and Cost. Impact: As measured aurally, where conservation happens is affected by population density and development potential. There is a selection bias for protecting land least likely to get developed as it's easier and large parcels are much more likely to be protected as the cost per acre is lower.
 - e. How to estimate impact of conservation: Using a “matching method” for similar use outcomes for parcels not protected. All variables described. Protection reduced development during time period of study and factors most associated with protection were travel time to urban areas. Fee acquisition stronger association with forest protection than with conservation restriction (CR). Prices of abutting property go up and does that increase likelihood of development? Not observed in this study.
 - f. Currently researchers are working on getting solid cost estimates for value of parcels with CRs. Looking at impact on automating appraisals on land with CRs. FMV with and without restrictions compared to estimated CR value. Highly variable with given number of impacts on appraisal process. Noted fraud cases elsewhere in the country. Issues noted: appraisal cost; vulnerability to potential bias; using all available land sales data in MA.
 - g. One goal is to provide a ‘one click’ estimate of the value of a CR for any parcel with a tax incentive calculator and link to the local land trust. The site should be able to give a land owner an approximation of the value/cost of CR for conservation outcome. Goal to have useful tool for both landowner and land trusts.
 - h. Questions to be pursued: how zoning, new roads, etc. impact value; balance of type of land conserved, e.g. need to look at meadow loss and other habitats; impact of bargain sales, etc. on sales data at Department of Revenue (DOR); value of land use “losses” with CR and impact on landowner; impact of other variables: e.g. town water and sewer; how to estimate budget for an acquisition and how this tool could be used for preparing large scale, multi-owner acquisitions. (see free AcreValue tool on web); possible negative impacts on value available to the landowner and variability as often assessment values are used for basis of calculation; impact of agricultural value option on APR land.
 - i. Acknowledged research colleagues: Jonathan Thompson, Harvard Forest; Spencer Meyer, Highstead Foundation; Kate Sims, Amherst College.
 - j. Paper and PDF of presentation will be accessible on members only section of MLTC’s website massland.org.
8. **Legislative Advocacy.**
 - a. No major policy updates other than the Farm Bill passage.
 - b. Will pursue increased funding for the CLTC.
 - c. Planning engagement method for LTs to sign-on support for advocacy actions as allowed.

- d. MLTC exploring formal quarterly gatherings focused on advocacy to meet at the Nature Conservancy.

9. **Board of Directors Nominating Committee Discussion.**

- a. Kathy Orlando requested volunteers for the Nominating Committee. Buzz Constable summarized the process: the Nominating Committee will present their recommendations to the SC and the SC presents the slate at the Annual Meeting.
- b. Rich Hubbard noted that individuals in addition to LTs can be members of the MLTC.
- c. Please email Kathy Orlando and Carolyn Sedgwick by January 14th with board nominee suggestions.
- d. A suggestion was made to involve the Young Land Professionals and do training on how to advocate. Carolyn Sedgwick noted Steve Long's workshops at the MLCC.

1:07PM Rita Grossman moved to adjourn and Buzz Constable seconded. **VOTE:** Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,
Rita Gibes Grossman, clerk