



Setti D. Warren
Mayor

CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS
Department of Planning and Development

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Members

Dan Green
Judy Hepburn
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Norm Richardson
Jane Sender
Ira Wallach, Chair
Jeff Zabel (Alt.)

Conservation Commission

1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, Massachusetts 02459
(617) 796-1134

Mayor Setti Warren
1000 Commonwealth Ave.
Newton, MA 02459

Board of Aldermen
1000 Commonwealth Ave.
Newton, MA 02459

October 2, 2015

Dear Mayor Warren and Board of Aldermen,

I write as Chair and on behalf of the City of Newton Conservation Commission.

The Commission understands that, as part of a larger transaction, an approximately-13-acre wooded area located off Hammond Pond Parkway, and contiguous with protected City of Newton-owned and state-owned conservation land, is in the process of being sold. Acknowledging that the contemplated transaction is one between private parties and wishing not to interfere with that private transaction, the Newton Conservation Commission encourages and would fully support a City effort to ensure the long-term protection of the contiguous wooded portion of this parcel, for its irreplaceable conservation, ecological and environmental qualities.

This wooded area may be the largest, privately-owned open-space land area remaining in the City of Newton. This private wooded area, joined with the adjacent Department of Conservation and Recreation Hammond Pond Reservation and Newton's Webster Conservation Area, would constitute the largest contiguous piece of protected open space in Newton. It comprises approximately 13 acres of mature hardwood forest with very few invasive species. It provides a tremendous diversity of ecological niches and wildlife habitats, including a large wetland in the interior of the parcel that is a Certified Vernal Pool, recognized by state environmental authorities (and the Commission) as an extremely valuable natural resource. In addition, the wooded area is home to hiking trails that have historically been heavily utilized by the public and which connect to the many miles of trails on the adjacent Department of the Conservation and Recreation and Newton's Conservation land.

The Conservation Commission sees this as an opportunity and an obligation to prevent a virtually irretrievable ecological disappointment, and by this letter expresses its support for the protection of the ecological and recreational qualities of this wooded area. It is an opportunity that should not be squandered and an obligation that should be met. The public interest that would be served by its preservation is manifest. Accordingly, the Commission recommends that the City make every reasonable and practicable effort to protect the ecological and conservation value of this land and create an enduring legacy. The Commission is prepared to participate in efforts to achieve that goal, as well as to assume the stewardship of the results of that effort.

The Commission looks forward to the opportunity to contribute to the dialogue it hopes and expects will take place in the very near future on this important and possibly time-sensitive subject.

Sincerely,

Ira Wallach, Chairman
Newton Conservation Commission



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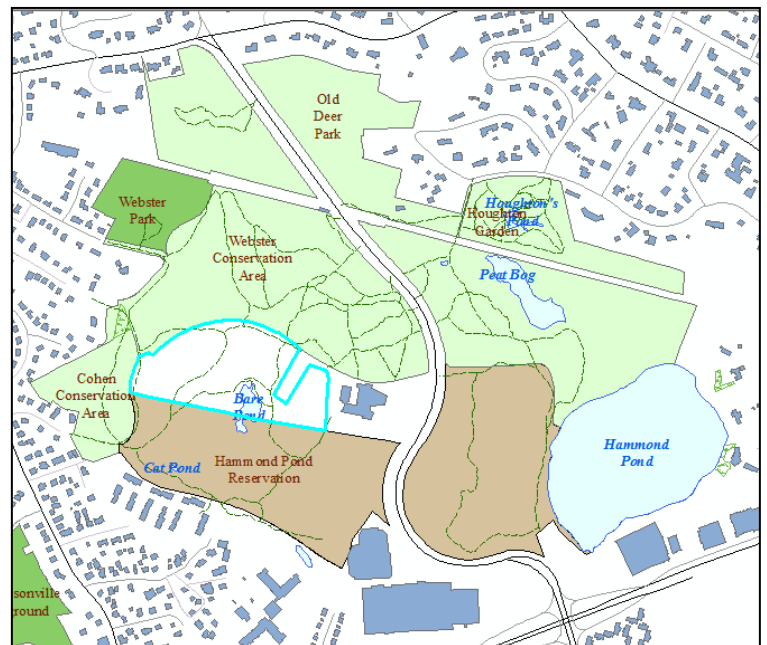
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To: Newton Community Preservation Committee
From: Newton Conservation Commission
Re: Protection of wooded portion of 300 Hammond Pond Parkway
Date: November 10, 2015

The Commission understands that the parcel of land at 300 Hammond Pond Parkway is in the process of being sold, although the timing of that sale has not been made public by either party to it. For that reason, and as a follow-up to the Conservation Commission's October 2, 2015, letter to the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen regarding the preservation of the open space at 300 Hammond Pond Parkway (letter attached), the Conservation Commission would like to meet with the Community Preservation Committee at its earliest convenience.

Aware of the September 23, 2015, and October 5, 2015 resolutions by the Board of Alderman with regard to 300 Hammond Pond Parkway, at its most recent public meeting, the Commission discussed its potential role in any effort the City might undertake to preserve the undeveloped portion of that property as open space. One of the preliminary steps the Commission is considering is applying to the Community Preservation Committee for funds for any appraisal and/or other consulting services that may be necessary or desirable to further the public interest in the permanent protection of the undeveloped portion of 300 Hammond Pond Parkway, should the City choose to do so. While it is not yet certain that funding for that purpose will be necessary, or whether any subsequent protection efforts, would require further CPA funding, the Commission thought it best to inform CPC of the Commission's potential request(s) as early as practicable, to enable the CPC to integrate any such funding into its planning, should it choose to do so.



The wooded portion of the land to be sold is the largest piece of entirely undeveloped private land in all of Newton. Together with the adjacent Department of Conservation and Recreation's parcel and Newton's Webster Conservation Area, these parcels constitute the largest contiguous area of natural open space in Newton. This is, therefore, an unusual and significant opportunity for meaningful preservation of open space.

Municipal Chronology

- Newton Conservation Commission's 10/2/15 letter to Mayor and Newton Board of Aldermen (attached)
- Newton Board of Aldermen docket item #195-15(3) "requesting that, in order to preserve the conservation and recreation values of the land, and to protect existing adjacent public open spaces, the Board of Aldermen vote to acquire for the City of Newton either the undeveloped portion of the land at 300 Hammond Pond Parkway or a conservation restriction on such land. [10/23/15 @ 2:55 PM]"
- This informal letter of interest from the Conservation Commission

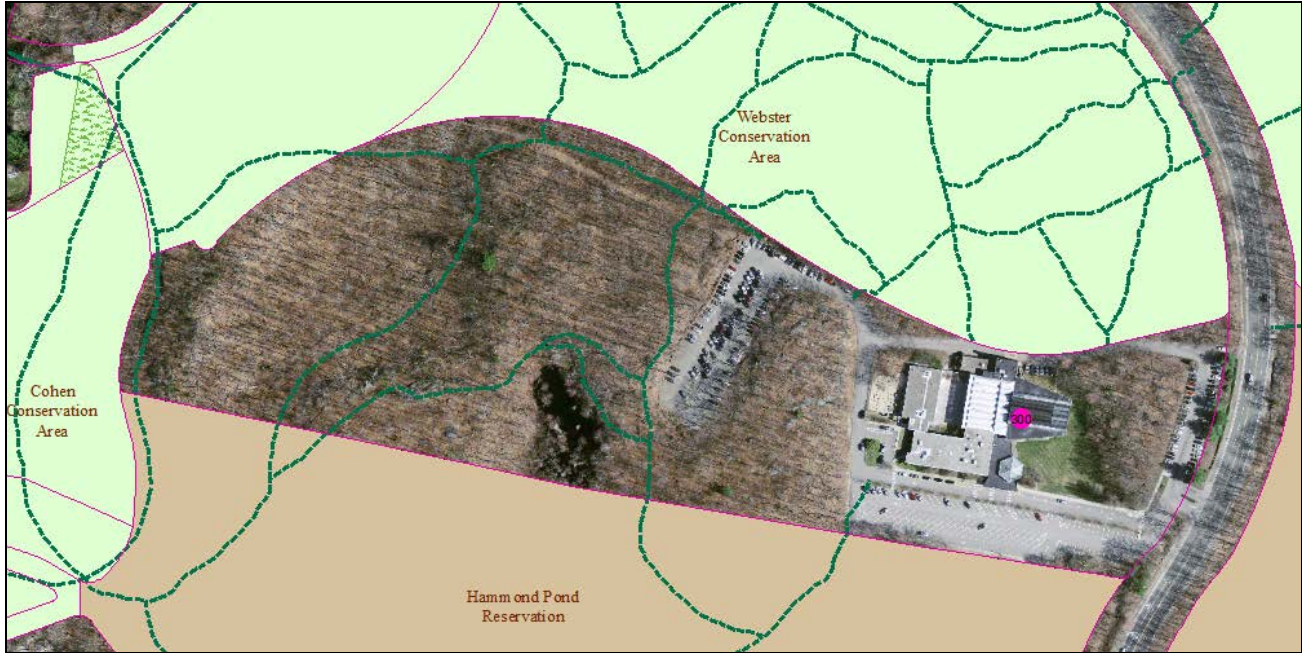
We look forward to working with the Community Preservation Committee to achieve the City's goals to preserve the conservation and environmental and open-space value of this undeveloped land for the benefit of the current and future residents of the City.

Conservation Commission

1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Email: jsteel@newtonma.gov

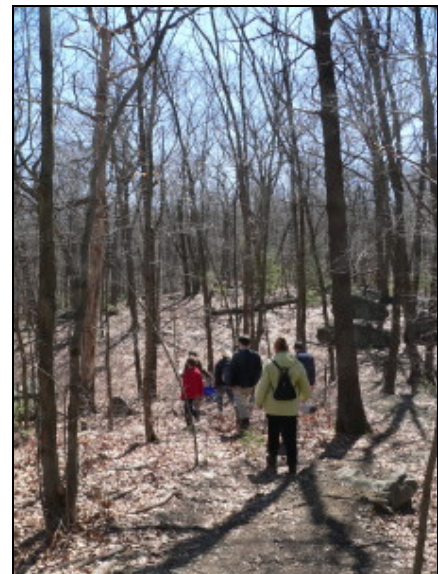
Aerial view of 300 Hammond Pond Parkway with adjacent public open space and trails



Scenes of 300 Hammond Pond Parkway



Vernal Pool



Popular wooded trails

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Sincerely,

Ira Wallach, Chairman
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