

President's Letter February 2018

It's already 2018, and we have survived a tumultuous year. The hurricanes, wildfires and mudslides have devastated large regions of our country, causing loss of lives, wiping out entire communities, destroying sensitive environmental areas, and costing hundreds of billions of dollars. In the meantime, we work in our own communities to preserve and protect the most critical land for the health of our environment and for the beauty of our landscapes.

In Hampden, we hope to finalize the Mt Vision project, a 39 acre parcel with frontage on North Rd and a right of way on Burleigh Rd in Wilbraham. This purchase, by the Town of Hampden using CPA funds, was put on hold due to the untimely death of the owner. After a lengthy probate process, we expect to complete the sale soon. Minnechaug Land Trust will hold the Conservation Restrictions and act as stewards.

We are partnering with Mass Audubon to preserve 77 acres that abuts Laughing Brook Conservation land, crosses the Scantic River, and extends to Chaplin Rd. We are in the process of putting together financial strategies using a combination of grants, CPA monies, sale of a few frontage lots, and fundraising. We hope we can reach an agreement with the owners to save this beautiful parcel. We'll keep you posted.

We are also working with private landowners to assist in applying to the Mass Conservation Land Tax Credit program. This is a grant of up to \$75,000 for a landowner to permanently protect land with Conservation Restrictions, while continuing to own and use the land.

In Wilbraham, the purchase of Mt. Marcy was once again our main focus. We applied for a LAND grant to supplement the funds that were approved from the CPA for the purchase. The project was praised by the state representatives from the grant program, so we were surprised and disappointed when we found that the program had been scaled back last year to the point where they couldn't fund all worthy projects, including ours.

This year we will persevere in our quest to purchase Mt. Marcy and feel we have a plan that is more within our control. This will involve asking for a little more CPA funding, and a pledge from MLT to contribute to the purchase. We thank you for your past and future support that allows us to continue our work and step in financially when needed on projects like Mt. Marcy. Together we are all working to protect the natural beauty of our towns.

Sincerely,

Sherry Himmelstein

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