

President's Message January 2023

As we begin a new year, I have the opportunity to write to the Minnechaug Land Trust (MLT) membership for the first time as your president. I think this is a good opportunity to reflect on our past, and think about where the future might take us.

For over a quarter of a century Sherry Himmelstein has led our organization with an enthusiasm for land preservation greater than anyone I have ever met. She started what we have today by forming the Hampden Land Project (HLP) in the 1990's in order to preserve the Minnechaug Mountain property in Hampden. That successful project was the first of many that she lent her time and expertise to, and without that, they wouldn't have been completed.

About 20 years ago, a group of us were looking to form a land trust in Wilbraham for a similar project to save the Rice Fruit farm. It made sense to combine with the already existing HLP, which was renamed to create the MLT we know today. Since then, we have worked together to preserve well over 1000 acres in our two towns that will continue to be enjoyed for generations.

I would like to personally thank Sherry for her many years of service, and also thank her on behalf of the many people who have, and will continue to enjoy the fruits of her labor. We are truly blessed to live in Hampden and Wilbraham, and a big part of the beauty of our towns is due to Sherry's work in conjunction with the land trust.

What happens to this great legacy we have in the future? We now own many Conservation Restrictions on land which require we oversee them and maintain good stewardship. I see two possible outcomes that could play out over the coming years.

The first is that our current board eventually retires and MLT gets absorbed into another land trust that takes over our obligations. The other option, which I prefer and hope we can manage, is for us to recruit new board members to continue the work we have done long into the future. Keeping our efforts local will allow our members to continue to identify important projects and get the support we need from the local community to accomplish our goals.

We appreciate the financial support you have given MLT through the years. Now, more than ever, we need your help to continue to preserve the beautiful landscapes that make our two towns such desirable places to live. Do you know someone who may be interested in joining us as a land trust member or contributing as a member on our Board? Please reach out to HLP455@aol.com; we would love to hear from you.

Thank you,

Steve Lawson President, Minnechaug Land Trust

I would like to contribute to Minnechaug Land Trust by:

Becoming a member _____ \$15 donation for member (additional contributions appreciated)

Helping with trail work (email) _____

I would like to speak with someone about the board (email) _____