Conserving the historic Wespalis Farm

Community discussion
Thursday, January 23, 2020
6:30 pm at New Braintree Historical Society
Important Farm Resources

- 860 West Brookfield Road and Prouty Road
- Two parcels (149.19 acres west, 61.64 acres east)
- Meadow Brook is a cold-water fishery
- 30+ acres of prime agricultural soils actively farmed
- Wooded slopes of Whortleberry Hill
- Wildlife corridor and interior forest habitat
- Buildings include: three bedroom apartment, commercial kitchen, commercial freezer and refrigerator space, workshop, multiple outbuildings
Conservation Strategy
Options for permanent restrictions where farm remains in private ownership

**Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR)**
- Eliminates non-farm related development
- Obligation to farm
- Qualified farmer is owner
- Requires “prime agricultural soils”
- Held and monitored by the Commonwealth of Mass. Dept. Agricultural Resources

**Conservation Restriction (CR)**
- Eliminates development – “no mining, dumping, paving or building”
- Stewardship is determined by landowner with farm plan and/or forest plan
- Held and monitored by the Town of New Braintree Conservation Commission
- East Quabbin Land Trust can assist with long-term monitoring
Benefits for New Braintree

- Farming and forest management remain integral to land
- Rural character of the community is enhanced
- Annual property taxes remain the same
- Maintain a small business opportunity in town
- High-quality wildlife and stream is preserved
Next Steps for New Braintree

- Agreement of Selectboard and Conservation Commission
- Additional community meetings and property visits
- Apply for Mass. L.A.N.D. (local acquisitions for natural diversity) grant (reimburses 66% of costs)
- Update Open Space and Recreation Plan
- Fall Special Town Meeting
- If L.A.N.D. grant awarded – conserve property
Next Steps for East Quabbin Land Trust

- Negotiate purchase with Bohans
- Draft L.A.N.D. grant application
- Support Open Space and Recreation Plan updates
- Fundraise local match for L.A.N.D. grant (34% match)
- Seek farm purchaser
Funding Strategy

**EXPENSES**
- Purchase price (land and buildings with no restrictions) = A
- Price of buildings = B
- Price of land (after restriction in place) = C
- Value of Conservation Restriction A - C = D

A = B + C + D

**INCOME**
- L.A.N.D. grant = 66% of D
- Fundraising = 34% of D
- Conservation farmer = B + C
Timing

- Seek Selectboard approval
- Update Open Space & Recreation Plan
- Appraisal
- Submit L.A.N.D. grant
- Appropriate funds
- L.A.N.D. grant award notification
- Conserve the farm

- February meeting
- Begin February – complete by mid-July
- ASAP
- mid-July
- Fall town meeting
- November/December??
- June 30, 2021
Case Study: Gross family farm
203 East Street, Petersham

- Selectboard & Conservation Commission agreement – spring 2015
- P&S on 238 acres with barn – April 2015
- EQLT purchase – July 2015
- Open house for community – August 2015
- Seek conservation buyer – fall 2015
- EQLT grants to Petersham for purchase – May 2016
- CR recorded - June 20, 2016
- Sale to private farmer – June 22, 2016
PURCHASE PRICE = $660,000

INCOME
- L.A.N.D. grant = $240,000
- Fundraising = $135,000
- Conservation farmer = $300,000
Questions??