Article 43 Cowles Land Conservation Purchase

April, 2013

From a conservation perspective:

This land would provide a contiguous conservation resource for the northern end of town that is an integral part of Cushman's history. It is the largest contiguous woodland in North Amherst, and though it was recently logged, it remains a rich example of a central New England forest: its mix of hardwoods and conifers, dramatic ledges, wetlands, and diverse wildflowers. It is also an important part of the wildlife corridor extending from the vast woodlands in Shutesbury and provides habitat for a diverse group of animals. It is not uncommon to see bears, coyotes, fox, raccoon, deer, and many smaller species. Moose are occasional visitors. It is a wonderful area for birds, with many species of woodpeckers, hawks, and songbirds. The salamander crossing is recognized as a unique natural resource by the town's **Open Space and Recreation Plan.**

From an historical perspective:

Cushman village is listed on the **National Register of Historic Places,**
and development of that land has the potential to threaten the historic nature of Cushman Village, which has long been recognized as a distinct, unique section of town since the 19th century. Even before then, Cushman village grew up along a 17th century Native American trail called the Nashaway Path. Settlers moved into this area in mid 18th century when some of Amherst's earliest farmers built their homesteads on Henry St and Leverett Road. The village center as we now know it developed in the early 19th century when modest houses were erected for the workers in the Factory Hollow mills. Many of the homes present in the center of Cushman date from the early and mid 19th century and maintain their original architectural identity. The Cushman Market and Cafe occupies a site by the railroad tracks that has housed a village market or general store since 1892, which probably makes it the oldest continuous retail presence in Amherst. As there has been a market in Cushman for 121 years there has been a school on Henry St for 147 years. A children's center now occupies the former Cushman grade school erected in 1927 adjoining the site of a small village school built in 1866.

Many of you are familiar with Ft. Juniper, 170 Market Hill Rd, in Cushman, where poet laureate Robert Francis lived, wandered the land, hosted his friend Robert Frost, and wrote many of his works. It is now used as a residential retreat for writers.

Incidentally, the oldest structure in the North Amherst/Cushman village area is an ice house dragged over from Puffer's Pond cited on Henry St. opposite Pine, and appears to be directly in the path of the proposed entrance to the development.

From a recreation perspective:

This land is used for passive recreation generally, although some ATVs and motorized vehicles use it occasionally. In winter, many people cross country ski or snow shoe through the trails, and show mobiles make it as well. The Robert Frost Trail goes through it, and is used by many residents beyond our local area. This connects the land to the Puffer Pond and the Amethyst Brook recreation areas. Runners and mountain bikers take advantage of its beauty. During the appropriate season, hunters often traipse back there looking for game.

In summary: The proposed development threatens to eliminate a woodland that knits together several values that we embrace as critically important in the Town of Amherst. It provides recreational opportunities to a wide variety of people – from serious hikers to local hunters. It stands as one of the last undeveloped woodland habitats in Amherst that supports a rich and diverse mix of wildlife. Its continued protection will serve to help the Town of Amherst preserve the extraordinary historic value of Cushman Village. Furthermore, both the Master Plan and Conservation Plan support our proposal to conserve the land and thus protect one of the oldest village centers, one which existed historically (alluded to above) and, as our rapid organization proves, is still a viable center.

List of Granting Agencies We've Either Contacted or Will Contact as of 4/22/13

1. Community Preservation Act Committee
2. Kestrel Trust
3. Mount Grace Trust
4. Trust for Public Land, Massachusetts
5. Trustees of Reservations
6. New England Forestry Foundation
7. Massachusetts Audubon Society
8. LAND Program, Energy and Environmental Affairs (State)
9. Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (State)
10. Department of Conservation and Recreation (State)
11. Forest Legacy Program, U. S. Forest Service (federal)

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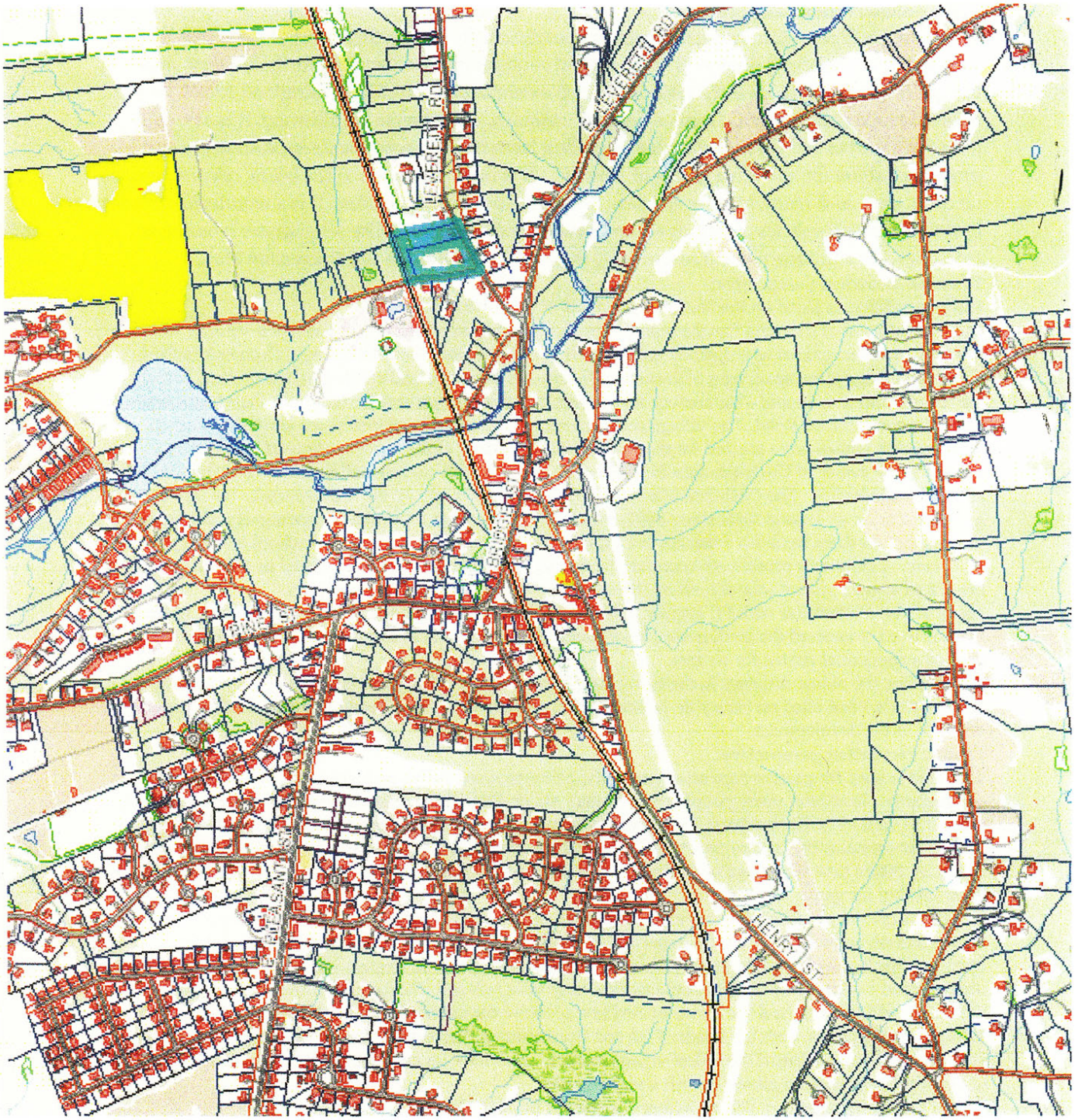

Submitted by Jack Hirsch

on behalf of Save Historic Cushman