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To: Community Preservation Act Committee  
From: David Ziomek, Director- Conservation and Development  
Re: FY 12 Funding Request  
Date: January 12, 2011

**Updated Funding Proposal**

This proposal represents the current open space priorities of the Conservation Commission for FY 12. The Commission's recommendations are based on the approved Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). A formal presentation with color images and maps of all properties will be presented to the CPAC in January. Please note that appraisals for some projects are still pending. The Commission has not formally ranked these projects but will do so in January.

**Appraisals, Surveys and Related Studies**

Funding for required appraisals and surveys can often mean the difference between a land preservation project moving forward or not. Currently, the Conservation Department budget does not include funds for appraisals or any of the other due diligence costs. This funding is critical to get projects started and establish value.

**Appraisals and Surveys: \$ 25,000**

*Feasibility:* Using CPA funds for upfront costs of open space projects has been our practice in Amherst for many years. Appraisals, surveys and related studies are expensive -\$1000 -\$10,000.

*Urgency:* A number of costly appraisals are anticipated during 2011 making this request even more urgent. It is critical that the department have the funds easily accessible when opportunities arise.

*Population(s) served:* Conservation land and preserved farmland in Amherst serves a broad range of people of all ages and races.

*Acquisition or preservation of threatened resources:* The land preservation priorities outlined in the Open Space and Recreation Plan includes habitat for rare and endangered species as well as threatened farmland.

*Possibility of multiple sources of funding:* Town staff actively seek matching funds for appraisals from land trusts and foundations.

*Description of Project:* Funding will pay for appraisals, surveys and related studies such as wetlands and habitat assessments.

*Funding Available:* Some unspent CPA funding is available but commitments for appraisals will likely use most of that during the first six months of 2011.

*Priorities set by requesting town committees or commission:* The Conservation Commission has consistently supported reasonable allocations of CPA funds for due diligence costs.

**North Amherst**

Amherst has a long history of working to preserve forest and farm land along the Cushman Brook and Mill River. Town Meeting recently voted to fund the purchase of land owned by Susan and John Stosz off of East Leverett Road that adds to conservation holdings upstream of Puffer’s Pond. Working closely with the same landowners, the Conservation Department is requesting funds to preserve an additional 26 acres with more than 1000 feet of frontage along the Cushman Brook.

**Stosz (Market Hill Road)**

Acreage:	26
Conservation Method:	Fee Acquisition and/or Conservation Restriction
Resource Values:	Wildlife habitat, watershed protection, passive recreation
Priority Level:	High
Identified on OSRP:	Yes
Threat:	Moderate
Development Potential:	Residential
Appraisal Completed:	Yes
Funding Sources:	CPA, Conservation Partnership Grant and local land trusts

**Land Conservation: \$ 150,000**

*Feasibility:* This project has a high probability of success given that the owners are committed to conserving their land and the project is relatively simple. The first phase of this initiative was recommended for funding by the CPAC and Town Meeting in the fall of 2010. A state grant for the matching funds has already been approved.

*Urgency:* While there is currently only a moderate threat to this property, this project has been a priority of the Conservation Department for many years. The opportunity to preserve this parcel in 2011 is very compelling and has motivated staff to put it at the top of our list. Staff recommends that the town not wait until a threat is imminent, rather work now with a motivated and willing seller.

*Population(s) served:* This land will add significant protection to the watershed of the Cushman Brook which is the main source of water for Puffer’s Pond. Keeping the pond clean and healthy for fish,

wildlife and people is a high priority for Amherst residents and visitors alike. Thousands of people visit the pond each year. The land offers excellent opportunities for fishing, hiking and passive recreation.

*Acquisition or preservation of threatened resources:* The property includes estimated and priority habitats for threatened, rare and endangered species in Massachusetts. It is also an excellent cold water fishery supporting naturally reproducing brook and brown trout.

*Possibility of multiple sources of funding:* Given the preservation approach and timeframe, CPA funds will be the only source of money.

*Description of Project:* The goal of this project is to protect approximately 26 acres of land in and along the floodplain of the Cushman Brook. CPA funds would cover the entire purchase price.

*Funding Available:* NA

*Priorities set by requesting town committees or commission:* The Conservation Commission has supported preservation of this parcel in previous years and will discuss the project in more detail at their meeting on January 26.

**South Amherst**

The Cole property east of the developing Atkins Corner Village Center has been under consideration by the Conservation Commission for the past two years. With a willing and motivated seller this might be the best opportunity for a creative conservation outcome of this unique property. Two cold water perennial streams and easy access to the old trolley line over the Mt. Holyoke Range make this a high priority for preservation.

**Cole (Route 116)**

Acreage:	12
Conservation Method:	Fee interest/Conservation Restriction
Resource Values:	Wildlife habitat, trails, watershed protection, farmland
Priority Level:	High
Identified on OSRP:	Yes
Threat:	High
Development Potential:	Housing
Appraisal Completed:	Yes
Funding Sources:	CPA, LAND grants, land trusts

**Land Conservation: \$200,000**

*Feasibility:* The owner of this property is a willing and motivated seller. With a new appraisal currently underway, hopes are high that a purchase price can be agreed upon by buyer and seller. The total acquisition cost will likely be between \$250,000 - \$600,000.

*Urgency:* The owner of this property is becoming increasingly anxious to sell – whether for development or conservation. The town has contracted for a new appraisal in the hopes of using the value for negotiating purposes. We expect the appraisal to be completed in February or early March.

*Population(s) served:* Given its proximity to the developing Atkins Corner Village Center, this property has the potential to serve a large number of Amherst residents, Hampshire College Students and visitors to town.

*Acquisition or preservation of threatened resources:* The two cold water streams are the most outstanding natural features of this property. Development of the land would likely have negative impacts on the health of these tributaries. The property is also important because it will provide a buffer and wildlife corridor between the Mt. Holyoke Range and the developing village center.

*Possibility of multiple sources of funding:* Staff is currently exploring partnerships with the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation which owns most of the land on the Mt. Holyoke Range. Applying for a state Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Grant in June 2011 is also a strong possibility.

*Description of Project:* The goal of this project is to protect 12 acres of upland forest, old fields and stream habitat at the foot of the Mt. Holyoke Range. If successful, the effort would provide and logical greenway connection from the Atkins Corner Village Center south to the old trolley line and up to the trails of the State Park. Abutting land owners have expressed interest in preserving their land if this parcel can be saved from development. This parcel contains two streams which support brook trout and other aquatic life.

*Funding Available:* There are currently no other sources of funding for this project.

*Priorities set by requesting town committees or commission:* The Conservation Commission has supported efforts to negotiate a deal for this land.

**TOTAL REQUEST: \$375,000**