

## **Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Charter – Draft #2**

The Town of Carlisle owns over thirty (30) conservation parcels totaling approximately 1,100 acres. The maintenance, monitoring, and stewardship of these lands has become an increasingly significant undertaking for the Carlisle Conservation Commission (CCC), which has numerous other statutory and administrative responsibilities. To support this work, the Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) shall assist the CCC by carrying out land stewardship activities in an advisory and implementation-support capacity, excluding trail maintenance, which is overseen by the Carlisle Trails Committee.

### Purpose and Guiding Principles

The overarching goal of the LSC is to assist in the stewardship of Town-owned conservation land in order to protect, maintain, and enhance the natural, scenic, historic, agricultural and grazing, public use, recreational, and cultural resources of these parcels. These resources include, but are not limited to, wildlife habitat, water resources, forest resources, scenic vistas, historic structures, and related cultural values.

The LSC shall be guided by two core principles:

1. To organize and coordinate land maintenance and management activities in a manner that balances potentially competing interests; and
2. To foster communication and collaboration among Town committees, boards, organizations, and the public with interests related to conservation land stewardship.

In furtherance of these principles, the LSC shall work collaboratively with the CCC and shall communicate regularly regarding activities, recommendations, and priorities.

As stewards of conservation land, the LSC also seeks to promote public understanding of and commitment to the protection of Carlisle's conservation lands, recognizing the unique ecosystems, recreational, agricultural, and educational opportunities afforded by permanently protected open space. The LSC shall maintain an appreciation for the importance of appropriate mixed use of these valued Town resources.

### Budget and Funding

The LSC shall develop an itemized annual budget proposal for the management of Town-owned conservation lands and for proposed special projects. This budget shall be reviewed & approved by the CCC. Upon approval, the LSC budget will be included as an itemized set of expenses within the CCC's annual budget request.

In cooperation with the CCC, the LSC may research and identify potential alternative funding sources for land stewardship activities, including grants and other public or private funding opportunities.

The LSC shall not independently prepare, submit, or represent the Town in connection with any grant application, funding proposal, or request for external funds.

Upon identifying a potential funding opportunity, the LSC shall present the opportunity to the CCC in a duly posted open meeting with sufficient time to allow for review, discussion, and direction prior to any drafting, structuring, or submission of an application. Any pursuit of external funding shall proceed only with CCC authorization and in compliance with all applicable Town requirements.

## **Membership and Structure**

The LSC shall be structured as follows:

- Seven (7) regular voting members, none of whom shall be members of the CCC.
- Voting members will serve staggered 3 year terms
- Voting members will be nominated by the LSC and presented to the CCC for support. Appointment will be by the Select Board.
- One (1) Chair and one (1) Vice Chair, (1) Secretary, (1) Treasurer elected annually by a majority vote of the LSC's voting members at the June regular meeting for the following fiscal year.
- One (1) member of the CCC shall serve as a non-voting liaison to the LSC.
- Seven (7) to ten (10) Associate Members, who shall be non-voting.
- An unlimited number of non-voting "Friends of the LSC," who are not required to attend meetings but may be asked to assist with specific tasks related to conservation land stewardship.
- The Select Board will assign one of their members to be their liaison to the LSC as a non-voting member.

## **Meetings/Administrative Activity**

- The LSC shall conduct its meetings in compliance with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.
- The LSC will aim to meet twice monthly – more or less frequently as agreed upon by the LSC members, but not less than once a month.
- When practicable, meetings shall be scheduled to alternate with CCC and Select Board meetings to promote coordination and communication.
- Meeting agenda preparation and publication (including posting on the Town website and in the Mosquito), distribution of meeting materials, posting of approved documents, and related administrative functions shall be supported by and processed through the CCC Administrator.

## **Financial Controls**

- The LSC shall develop an itemized annual budget and upon its approval by the CCC it will be included in the CCC's annual budget request.

- Funds appropriated for LSC activities shall be expended only for their approved purposes.
- Transfers between budget line items or expenditures for unapproved purposes shall require prior approval by the CCC.

## **Responsibilities and Core Tasks**

Subject to CCC oversight and approval, and consistent with applicable laws and regulations, the LSC shall undertake the following responsibilities as agreed upon by the LSC and CCC:

- Review existing Rules and Regulations related to Town-owned conservation lands; recommend updates or draft proposed new Rules and Regulations as appropriate for CCC consideration and approval.
- Advise the CCC regarding agricultural licenses, including:
  - Reviewing the suitability of conservation parcels for agricultural use based on habitat, ecological, and agricultural values;
  - Monitoring activities conducted under active licenses, including procedures and chemical use, as appropriate; and
  - Assisting the Foss Farm Community Garden Manager as requested.
  - Recommendations shall be presented to the CCC for final determination.
  - Note – see below: Process for license application
- Land Use Permitting:
  - The Land Stewardship Committee shall serve as the issuing authority for land use permits related to Town-owned conservation lands, as defined by and consistent with applicable Rules and Regulations approved by the CCC.
  - Permit applications shall be reviewed and acted upon by the LSC in a properly posted public meeting. Approval of a land use permit shall require a majority vote of the LSC's voting members.
  - The LSC shall ensure that permit conditions are clearly documented and that permittees comply with all approved conditions.
  - The LSC shall monitor permitted activities and may recommend enforcement actions, permit modification, or revocation to the CCC when necessary.
  - The CCC shall retain oversight authority, including the right to review issued permits for consistency with adopted regulations and to take action if a permit is found to conflict with statutory obligations, conservation restrictions, or Town policy.
  - No individual member of the Land Stewardship Committee, including the Chair, shall have authority to act on behalf of the Committee, interpret policy, grant or revoke permissions, or communicate binding decisions to third parties unless such authority has been expressly granted by a vote of the Committee taken at a duly posted open meeting, and, where required, approved by the Carlisle Conservation Commission.
  - Existing and long-standing uses of conservation land that are consistent with the purposes of the land and have historically occurred with the knowledge or approval of the Town shall not be restricted, modified, or prohibited except through a formal review process conducted by the LSC in an open meeting, with

opportunity for stakeholder input, and subsequent action by the CCC where applicable.

- Maintain and update kiosk structures and signage, including educational materials and visitor information.
- Land maintenance:
  - Coordinate and carry out approved land maintenance activities through volunteer efforts and/or budgeted third-party contracts;
  - Provide oversight of such activities;
  - Report regularly to the CCC on the status and progress of maintenance work and projects;
  - Submit proposed significant changes to land maintenance practices to the CCC for review and approval.
- Prepare and update baseline documentation for Town-owned conservation parcels, as appropriate.
- Coordinate and collaborate with other Town entities regarding land management interests.
- Manage administrative tasks related to LSC activities, including website content, outreach for new members, and participation in mapping or documentation projects, as appropriate.
- Maintain, in coordination with the CCC Administrator, organized files for each conservation parcel at Town Hall.
- Prepare an annual report summarizing monitoring activities, observations, and recommendations for future maintenance or improvements.
- Develop annual and five-year planning documents related to land stewardship priorities and funding needs for CCC consideration.
- Pursue special projects related to conservation land stewardship, including environmental education, habitat restoration, invasive species management, resource inventories, and vernal pool certification, subject to CCC approval.

## **Licensing Process**

- Applications for land use licenses shall be submitted to the Carlisle Conservation Commission (CCC) and concurrently provided to the Land Stewardship Committee (LSC).
- The LSC shall review license applications and discuss them in open meeting, consistent with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, and may solicit input from relevant stakeholders and the public.
- Following deliberation, the LSC's voting members may vote to recommend a preferred application or approach, including suggested conditions or modifications, and may work with applicants to clarify or refine proposals.
- The LSC shall transmit all applications received for a given parcel, along with its recommendations and rationale, to the CCC for consideration.
- Final review, decision-making, and approval of land use licenses shall rest solely with the CCC.