

## **Questions and Answers about the Two Brooks Campaign**

### **What is the total purchase price for the property and how will that be funded?**

The total purchase price for the 113 acres is \$800,000, \$10,000 of which has already been paid as a deposit when the Town signed the Purchase and Sale agreement. The Special Town Meeting will vote on committing the remaining \$790,000, of which \$320,000 will come from Community Preservation Funds and \$470,000 will come from a short-term municipal bond.

### **What is the total amount to be voted on?**

The total amount to be voted on will be \$820,000, including the \$790,000 toward the purchase, plus an additional \$30,000 from CPC funds, as a contingency fund; this is standard practice for all CPC projects in Plympton. The contingency may be used for the Conservation Restriction on the CPC acquired land, as well as for any technical or legal issues that may arise.

### **Is it customary for the warrant not to include specific amounts?**

Yes, it is standard legal practice throughout the Commonwealth not to list the specific amounts in warrants of this kind. At the Special Town Meeting, before the vote, a motion will be made to identify the funding source and amount.

**Does the Campaign include only town funds?**

No, the Campaign includes funds from CPC, bond funds to complete the immediate purchase, and private fundraising which includes contributions from individuals, foundations and businesses.

**Does the Campaign end after the Town Meeting vote?**

No. The private fundraising portion of the Campaign will extend through 2019. The Special Town Meeting vote as presented in the Town Warrant must be taken by late September so that the Town can complete the purchase by early November, as required by the Purchase and Sale agreement. This deadline comes from the timing requirements of the Chapter 61 Right of First Refusal process, under which the town is acquiring this land.

**How will the Town funds be used?**

The CPC funds are designated to conserve the 100 acres of mixed forests, hills and wetlands in the rear of the property, including the former cranberry bog and the small reservoir. This area would be permanently placed under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission. The bonded funds are designated to complete the purchase, including the forested acreage fronting on Prospect Road, a portion of which will be sold for not more than three house lots. The remaining land will include a small parking lot, a natural area for recreation and trails between the front and rear sections. A conservation restriction will be put on this public land. All public lands will be open for public access.

## **What is the purpose of the private fund-raising part of the Campaign?**

Contributions from the private sector are integral to this Campaign.

Individuals, foundations and businesses are key to its long-term success.

Private fundraising should enhance the Campaign in the following ways:

- Increase the likelihood that the Campaign is a success. The funds will expand the project's financial capacity and flexibility to respond to needs and opportunities that may emerge. Private funds may be used to secure some of the front recreational area (i.e. the equivalent of one lot) or help pay off project costs such as title questions or interest payments on the bond, thus negating dependence on Town funding for these purposes.
- Private contributors represent a broad range of supporters with diverse connections and abilities, who will not only support the Preserve during its creation, but during its start-up phase and thereafter, helping ensure the success of the project.

## **What happens if Town Meeting does not approve buying the land?**

The \$10,000 deposit from CPC funds will be returned to the Town and private contributions made directly to the Town made for the Campaign will be returned to each donor.

If the Town does not purchase the property, the current owners, the Atwood Family Trust, will continue to seek a buyer. They are anxious to sell, so the most recent bidders would be the most likely candidates to resume the Purchase and Sale agreement. Their previous goals included renovating the cranberry operation in the rear and building up to 5 houses in the front area along Prospect Road.

**Once the land is acquired, is it up to the Open Space Committee to determine when to sell the front lots and for how much?**

No. The Town Meeting warrant article authorizes the Board of Selectmen to initiate and oversee the procurement process, which must meet state standards for the advertising and selling of the land. The Town Meeting warrant article states that no more than 3 lots can be created on the land fronting on Prospect Road. Following Town Meeting approval of the purchase, the Open Space Committee, which will remain an advisor and technical resource for the BOS throughout this process, will secure the services of a surveyor and seek advice from expert advisors and others to configure the lots and prepare for the procurement process.

**How likely is it that the land fronting on Prospect Road will be attractive to potential buyers and raise the funds the Town needs to repay the bond?**

Since the Town received notice in early April that it would have the Right of First Refusal to purchase this land under state law - Chapter 61- the Open Space Committee has sponsored several fact-gathering reports:

- An appraisal by an appraiser very familiar with Plympton and the surrounding area,
- An analysis of water quality and quantity in the area by an expert hydrogeologist,
- An assessment of the parcel's overall environmental value by a leading environmental and planning expert.

If any one of these reports had indicated significant problems, the Open Space Committee would not have recommended that the Board of Selectmen sign the Purchase and Sale agreement. Each report, however, noted the significant benefits and opportunities the parcel would provide to the town, both financially and environmentally. The appraiser as well as local real estate experts all believe that any house lots put up for sale will be extremely desirable and will sell at very competitive rates – especially because they will be backed by 100+ acres of conservation land, and are in a desirable location.

**Do these lands provide important environmental benefits to the Town?**

Yes. The Two Brooks Preserve area has been identified by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program as being in one of Massachusetts “Core Habitats” and also in one of the state’s “Critical Natural Landscapes”. There are relatively few of each of these in the state.

The area plays a critical role in protecting and maintaining the quality of the town’s drinking water, which residents identified as their highest priority in a survey for the 2016 Open Space and Recreation Plan. The Preserve and neighboring land is rated in the top 20% of intact ecosystems in the state and one of the three most important in Southeastern Massachusetts.

The large blocks of intact, upland forests filter pollutants and absorb carbon, the aquatic areas support our stream and river systems, and provide habitat for fish and other aquatic species, and the extensive wetlands provide healthy hydrological conditions that help protect and maintain healthy drinking water. The area also provides invaluable wildlife habitat and is home to a diverse array of plant and animal species, including 12 species of special conservation concern.

The Massachusetts Heritage Program report notes that the large Landscape Block in which Two Brooks Preserve is located is “invaluable to wildlife habitat and other ecosystem values such as clean drinking water and absorbing carbon from the atmosphere”. It also notes that this Block is largely unprotected. Securing the Two Brooks Preserve will be an important step in securing these environmental benefits long-term.