



ACTON CONSERVATION TRUST

LAND TRUST NEWS

Volume 13, No. 1 March 2011

In This Issue

- ACT Annual Meeting
April 10, 2011, 7:30 PM
Acton Town Hall Room 204
Guest Speaker:
Roger Tetreault: Hiking
the Appalachian Trail**
-
- Completing the Caouette
Simeone Farm Land Purchase**
-
- The Town Celebrates
Preservation of Precious
Farmland in South Acton**
-
- Neighborhood Advocacy
Revisited**
-
- Holley Conservation Volunteer
Awards**

**Be Sure to Visit ACT's
New Website:
www.actonconservationtrust.org**



Acton Conservation Trust

A Non-Profit Land Trust

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Acton Conservation Trust
P.O. Box 658
Acton, 01720

March 22, 2011

Dear Friends and Acton Conservation Trust Members,

I've been taking stock recently, as I enter my 13th year with ACT, and it's been an increasingly busy time. Since 2001, with your help ACT has played a key role in accomplishing seven land preservation successes. And we continue to have other projects in various stages of development.

Each of those land acquisitions helped pave the way for the most recent one: purchase of the Caouette Simeone farmland in South Acton. Purchasing this land was a monumental achievement for the Town, and despite all the twists and turns that came up in the purchase process, the citizens of Acton voted overwhelmingly (381 to 43) in favor.

We sincerely thank the Selectmen for not giving up when due diligence led to the need for pollution mitigation. ACT also wants to thank the "Save the Farm" advocates who tirelessly stayed on top of all new developments and kept everyone informed with videos, fliers, emails, letters to the editor and more and by doing so helped push this project over the top. We also want to thank the Steinberg Lalli Foundation for their very large and timely donation to help offset the cost of the land.

ACT deeply appreciates its membership who made it possible for us to make a significant donation to help leverage the project as well. Support like this bodes well for future land protection project. I hope you will encourage your friends and neighbors to join ACT so we can continue to reach out to landowners such as the Caouette/Simeone's and will make every effort to continue to bring important projects to the table.

Sincerely,

Susan Mitchell-Hardt

*Did you remember
to renew your
membership for
2011?
To the many who have
already done so, thanks
for renewing your
support. For those who
have yet to renew, please
use the form on page
seven of this newsletter
to keep your membership
active*

The Acton Conservation Trust is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that can hold permanent conservation easements, accept gifts of land, accept tax-deductible gifts to be used for open space preservation and purchase land for conservation purposes. We also provide education to landowners about various options for preservation. ACT is one of more than 130 such organizations in Massachusetts, and is a member of the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition and the national Land Trust Alliance. More information is available at ActonConservationTrust.org or by emailing Susan Mitchell-Hardt at mitchell-hardt@comcast.net

Land Preservation 2010

Completing the Caouette Simeone Farm Land Purchase



Last year at this time we were exhorting ACT's members to attend April 2010 Town Meeting to vote on the purchase of the Caouette farmland in South Acton. At that time the proposal was to purchase the land using Community Preservation Funds and purchase price was to be \$1 million. Indeed at Town Meeting this proposal received widespread support and passed easily.

We also reported last year that no land purchase is ever as easy as it appears on the surface. This certainly proved to be true with this land. Beyond the complications detailed last year (dealing with the lot associated with the existing house on the land) it was found that a small portion of the land in the eastern section had reportable ground pollution evidently from the former tannery and possibly the steam locomotive repair facility that once occupied the site. It was also discovered that a boundary location error, that attributed too much of the pond area to this property, had led to an overvaluation of the land. As a result, before the purchase could be completed, it was necessary to reduce the CPC contribution to the new appraised value and to add the cost of mitigating the ground pollution to the purchase price.

Since the purchase had to be completed by a certain agreed upon date, a Special Town Meeting was called on October 25, 2010 to consider these issues. The net result was that the Town was asked to appropriate an additional \$300,000 to cover both the change in the appraisal from the agreed-upon purchase price and the cost of mitigation. Since these monies would have to

come from general funds and not the CPC, ACT was concerned that this precious property was in peril of being lost to development. Accordingly we allocated \$10,000 from our general funds as a symbol of our good faith and belief in the importance of this purchase.

Another very generous donation of \$100,000 was provided by the Steinberg – Lalli Foundation thereby greatly reducing the appropriation required from Town Meeting. After a lively debate the warrant articles to provide for this additional funding to complete the purchase passed with a large majority, and the final purchase of the land was made in late October.

Lessons Learned

This project is a great example of how many different groups can and must work together to preserve these precious and ever more expensive open spaces. While ACT initiated this entire project it was the combined efforts of ACT, The Acton Open Space Committee and the Board of Selectmen that led to the successful outcome. In particular we would like to commend Selectmen Mike Gowing for his extraordinary efforts in completing this purchase.

This project illustrates how difficult and intricate land purchase can be, but the extreme satisfaction at seeing such broad-based celebration of our efforts is what makes it all the more worthwhile.

A Celebration of a Town Wide Effort

As a measure of the enthusiasm for this purchase the Maitland family graciously hosted a "victory party" to celebrate this accomplishment. This was a gala affair with more than 100 citizens gathering to celebrate and reminisce about the long and successful process. The highlight of the evening was when Terry Maitland presented commemorative pictures of the land to the key parties in this transaction. In particular he honored the Caouette family themselves, the Board of Selectmen and the Acton Conservation Trust.



Lauren Rosensweig-Morton, Steve Steinberg, Mike Gowing and Susan Mitchell-Hardt accept Recognition for their Roles in Completing the Caouette Farmland Purchase, as Host Terry Maitland Looks on

Board of Selectmen Honor the Trust for Their Donation to the Caouette Farmland

The Acton Board of Selectmen, at their March 1st meeting, took time out from their working agenda to acknowledge the efforts of ACT in helping complete the purchase of the Caouette farmland. Selectmen Mike Gowing, himself a key part of completing the purchase, accepted on behalf of the town a \$10,000 check from the trust. Board chairperson Lauren Rosensweig Morton gave thanks to the Trust for our efforts and also stressed the importance of the various groups working together to complete these vital projects.



Selectmen Mike Gowing Accepts ACT's Check for \$10,000 from Susan Mithcell-Hardt (President) and Hart Millet (Treasurer) as Board Member Terra Friedrichs looks on.

Neighborhood Advocacy – What Is It and Where Has It Worked?

More than 10 years ago, ACT developed a checklist under the heading of "neighborhood advocacy" that was a call for everyone acting to become involved in open space preservation. The checklist, which can be found on the ACT website, lists a number of actions that individuals and neighborhood groups can take to identify open space in the neighborhood and to learn about the ownership and development potential of this land. Typical actions include getting the Acton engineering maps or learning to use the new GIS viewer on the Town of Acton website, and learning about ownership from neighbors or from the North Middlesex Registry of Deeds website. Then, and most importantly, learn about what can be done once a specific parcel is under threat of development, which is where ACT can help the most.

Examples of Neighborhood Advocacy in Acton

There are several examples of how neighborhood advocacy can work. As far back as 1964 a group of neighbors in the North Acton-Pope Road area used a form of neighborhood advocacy to create what is now Spring Hill Road and the Spring Hill conservation area. In this case the neighbors became aware of the sale of the then 100 acre Spring Hill Farm to a developer from Lincoln. By joining forces they were able to purchase the land from the owner, restructure the development to minimize the number of lots (so is to recoup their investment) and then sell the remainder of the land to the Town for conservation purposes. The result was six houses on 40+ acres in some 40 acres of conservation land instead of potentially dozens of houses on two acre lots.

More recently when Camp Acton was to be sold by the Boy Scouts of America the neighbors in that area were the first to learn of it. As a result of this "early warning" and after a lot of legwork by both neighbors and Town officials a sale at very reasonable price was negotiated between the Boy Scouts and the Town.

Finally, a large farm and woodlot on the Concord Acton line was to be sold for development. Again the neighbors were able to come together, identify the land, the land owner, and determine possible courses of action. Unfortunately they were unable to act on the Concord portion of the land, but were quite successful in Acton. This group, as with the Spring Hill group, was able to purchase the land from the owner and resell to a developer with significant restrictions. As a result, the potential cluster development on 80 acres was reduced down to five large house lots. Although this did require some financial risk on the part of the neighbors, in the end they were able to break even for their efforts. There are other examples of such advocacy that typically involve single lots and the use of private funds to either prevent or control the nature of the development of the land. All of these are examples of successful applications of neighborhood advocacy.

How to Get Started

While the essence of neighborhood advocacy is local action, ACT has often convened or helped to convene neighborhood meetings to talk about this process and to help get it started. If you're interested in learning more, please check our website and then contact us at mitchell-hardt@comcast.net.

ACT ANNUAL MEETING

Notice of Annual Meeting of Members

Please note that the Annual Meeting of Members of the Acton Conservation Trust (ACT), a Massachusetts non-profit corporation, will be held on Sunday, April 10, at 7:30 PM at the Acton Town Hall, Room 204. We will first hear from our guest speaker Roger Tetreault on the topic "Hiking the Appalachian Trail". Immediately following, we will convene the brief business portion of the meeting, where members will be asked to:

- *Re-elect Susan Mitchell-Hardt, David Cochrane, Hart Millett, David Hardt, Brewster Conant, Sue Kennedy, Nan Towle Millett,, John Longden and Jim Snyder-Grant as Trustees, each to serve until the 2012 Annual Meeting and as otherwise provided in ACT's Bylaws.*
- *Re-elect David Hardt as Clerk and re-elect Hart Millett as Treasurer of ACT, each to serve until the 2012 Annual Meeting in accordance with ACT's Bylaws.*
- *Hear and comment on the Treasurer's Report and committee reports of 2010 activities, and to act upon such other business as may come before the meeting.*

Please Support the Open Space Set Aside at April Town Meeting

The Acton Conservation Trust would like to encourage support of the Community Preservation Committee's Warrant Article at April Town Meeting. Of particular interest is the Open Space Committee's Community Preservation proposal to set aside Community Preservation Funds. (Since land purchases do not always follow the funding calendar, it is necessary to set aside or "bank" that portion of the CPA funds not allocated for historical preservation or low income homes.)

This year the proposal is for a \$450,000 set aside, which will bring the Open Space Set-Aside fund up to a Total of \$1,395,000. This could be augmented by turn backs from the un-used appropriation for Caouette land, and from the anticipated for sale of Piper Lane house. This could bring the set aside up to some \$1.7M.

Conservation Volunteers of the Year

Bill and Nancy Kingman were both recognized at the Acton Conservation Trust's 2010 Annual Meeting as recipients of the 2009 Carol Holley Conservation Volunteer of the Year award, for their tremendous contributions to land preservation in Acton. They are long time ACT Members and former ACT Trustees, with Nancy serving a term as President and Bill serving as Chairman of the Membership Committee. However, their most enduring contribution came in December 2006 when Bill and Nancy donated a perpetual conservation easement to ACT on 6.4 acres of open meadows at their farm on 65 Esterbrook Road. The Kingmans join a distinguished list of Acton residents who have received the award since its inception 7 years ago:, including: 2003 Carol Holley, 2004 Linda McElroy and Bob Guba, 2005 Mary Michelman, 2006 Karen O'Neill, 2007 Betsy Eldridge, 2008 Pam Resor.



Be sure to come to our 2011 Annual Meeting on April 10 to find out who is the recipient of ACT's 2010 Carol Holley Conservation Volunteer of the Year award.



In Memoriam Mary Michelman, 1960-2010

Mary became a very visible and tireless supporter of environmental issues starting in 1998 when she began her work as head and founding member of the Acton Stream Team. Where there was pollution or contamination that threatened our water supply she made it her job to get it cleaned up properly. She was also a long term ACT supporter. In recognition for her long term commitment to the environment ACT made her the 2005 Carol Holley Conservation Award winner. ACT's Board of Trustees is pleased to have contributed to the Memorial Fund targeting one of the projects dear to her, recreating and enhancing the East Acton Village. Green. In that way she will always be with us.



Acton Conservation Trust 2010 Financial Statements

Jan - Dec
2010

Statement of Income and Expenses

Statement of Income and Expenses	
Income	
Membership Dues	\$15,275
Donations	50
Tote Bag Sales	35
Interest Income	305
Miscellaneous Income	885
Total Income	\$16,550
Expenses	
Operating Expenses	
Mailings and Supplies	1,162
Tote Bags	680
Organization Memberships	100
Fees	292
Insurance	1,890
Land acquisition	10,125
SVT Share of Membership Drv	0
Total Operating Expenses	14,249
Total Expenses	\$14,249
Net Income	\$2,300

Balance Sheet

Balance Sheet	
ASSETS	Dec 31, 09
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings/Investment	\$76,056
Land	19,777
TOTAL ASSETS	\$95,833
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	10,000
Equity	
General Fund Balance	15,908
Retained Earnings	67,625
Net Income	2,300
Total Equity	\$85,833
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	\$95,833



ACTON CONSERVATION TRUST

2011 Membership & Renewal Application

Join the many other townspeople who support our efforts to preserve open space in Acton.

Among other uses, your donations help ACT pursue opportunities to acquire land and conservation easements; they help us stay current on Land Trust developments through key publications and workshops; and, most importantly, they can help us move quickly if properties suddenly become available and we want to protect them from development.

- If you are not yet a Member of ACT (or have not yet renewed your membership for 2011), please join us!
- If you are already a Member for 2011, please pass this newsletter on to a friend who might be interested!

To join please visit: actonconservationtrust.org

Or mail this form to: Acton Conservation Trust
P.O. Box 658
Acton, MA 01720
Your gift to ACT is tax-deductible

Suggested levels of support :

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| ___ Individual \$20 | ___ Protector \$250 |
| ___ Family \$50 | ___ Supporter \$500 |
| ___ Friend \$100 | ___ Patron \$1,000 |
| ___ Other \$ _____ | |

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Your email address lets ACT keep you informed about news & local meetings related to conservation & open space preservation.

Please make your check payable to Acton Conservation Trust

Your gift to ACT is tax-deductible

- Please contact me about how I can get more involved!
- Please send the ACT Newsletter Electronically in the future.

ACT Leads a Walk of the Spring Hill Conservation Lands

David Hardt, ACT Clerk, led a walk of the Spring Hill Conservation Area for about 25 members and others on October 25, 2010. On a beautiful mid-fall day David (who co-owns the namesake Spring Hill Farm on Pope Road with his wife Susan Mitchell-Hardt) recited the history of the land starting with its original sale to Nathaniel Edwards in 1745, just ten years after Acton was chartered. He pointed out that the subdivision of the farm in 1964 was an excellent example of what ACT calls "Neighborhood Advocacy". Because a group of neighbors who were concerned about over-development of the area got together, they were able to purchase the land, and create large lots and deed restrictions to minimize development. They also created the seed property of the now over 400 acre Spring Hill/Camp Acton/Nashoba Brook Conservation lands. He pointed out that much of the original borders of the farm are still intact and members of the group were able to find an ancient well and building foundation back in the woods. A fine time was had by all, and it ended with a picnic in Camp Acton, which was also preserved by virtue of "Neighborhood Advocacy"



ACT Member Fred Seward Shows the Ancient Well Location



The Happy Hikers Enjoy a Picnic in Camp Acton after Touring the Spring Hill Area

**Sunday April 10, 2011, 7:30 PM Town Hall
An Evening with ROGER "HAMMER" TETREAUT
HIKING THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL**



Roger Tetreaut of Boxborough took the phrase "take a hike" literally when he decided to walk the 2,176.4 miles of the Appalachian Trail. A carpenter by trade, Roger is a backpacking and hiking enthusiast. After ten years of hiking the local terrain he decided early in 2008 to hike the Appalachian Trail.

It took Roger 5½ months to hike from Springer Mountain in Georgia to Mount Katahdin in Maine. He hiked from March 25 until September 7. During the hike he encountered temperatures ranging from 18° to 100° plus snow, lots of rain, deer, wild horses, wild long horned cattle, wild boar, mountain lions, bears, snakes, and many wonderful fellow thru-hikers.

Please join us and bring a friend to be entertained by pictures and stories of Roger's excellent adventure followed by a brief business meeting and snacks

Save The Date

ACT Annual Meeting

Sunday April 10, 2011

Acton Town Hall

ACTON CONSERVATION TRUST, Inc BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Susan Mitchell-Hardt, 369-9264		mitchell-hardt@comcast.net
<i>President</i>		
David Cochrane 263-0215		dcochrane@comcast.net
<i>Vice President</i>		
Hart Millett 621-8478		hart.millett@verizon.net
<i>Treasurer</i>		
David Hardt 369-9264		hardt@mit.edu
<i>Clerk</i>		
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