

## **Strawberry Hill (Formerly Wendel) - 106 Acres - Map 22D, Lot12 – 56 Jeffreys Neck Road**

Because of the urgency of this project (the property was being actively marketed for sale) and because the Open Space Program Manager had not yet been hired, the Trust for Public Land (TPL) was invited to step in and assist the Town in the permanent protection of the former Wendel property in the early winter of 2000. After many months, TPL successfully negotiated an agreement to acquire the entire property for \$4 million.

The original project structure called for the Town to contribute \$2 million towards the acquisition of a conservation restriction over the entire parcel, and for TPL to sell the restricted property, allowing for the development of one additional single-family house lot. In the spring of 2001, TPL and the Town agreed to shift the project whereby the Town would buy the fee-interest in 91-acres of the property (the conservation area) with assistance from state and federal funding, and TPL would sell a restricted residential lot on 15-acres, which included the first period structures.

After agreeing to pursue this approach and after preparing a proposal to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Town received favorable notice in November 2001 that the USFWS would provide \$1 million towards the Department of Environmental Management's (DEM) acquisition of a conservation restriction and DEM (together with the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs) agreed to provide an additional \$500,000. Because DEM/EOEA's contribution was contingent upon funding authorization from the state legislature (the "Environmental Bond Bill"), the Town agreed to front the state's contribution subject to reimbursement, and this additional Town expenditure was authorized at the fall 2001 STM.

The Town acquired the property in March, 2002 and shortly thereafter the Town Manager appointed a Stewardship Committee to develop a management plan for this property and make recommendations on how to manage this new public acquisition. The Town will manage the property for wildlife habitat and passive public recreational enjoyment. As of summer 2003, the Town is working to build a six-car, unpaved parking area to accommodate public access of this conservation property.

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## **Scott Farm Conservation Restriction - 83.5 Acres - Map 53C, Lot 12 – 35 Mill Road**

In the spring of 2001, the Town was approached by Ipswich River Preservation, LLC (IRP), which had recently formed in order to acquire and protect Scott Farm. IRP successfully purchased the fee interest in the property from three of the four Scott siblings but were unable to reach agreement with the fourth Scott sibling who indicated he would like to develop the property. While IRP had hoped to be able to acquire, protect, and resell the property with no external funding assistance, in order to "buy-out" the remaining owner, they needed assistance from the Town.

The engineering analysis and subsequent appraisal for the property showed that it could support up to 39-houselots resulting in a fair market value of \$4 million. Over the course of the spring and summer of 2001, the Town negotiated the terms of conservation restriction, the purchase of which would allow for the buyout of the fourth sibling and the protection of the most important resources on site. This conservation restriction eliminates all development from 45-acres including all of the front fields, all of the river frontage and adjacent forest, allows for the frontage barn/cottage to be sold (if desired) as a single-family house lot, and allows for the "backland" of approximately 35-acres to be developed as either a total of four ANR lots or one eight-lot cluster development. Under either development scenario, the Grantors are required to create a homeowners association, which will ensure that the terms of the CR are upheld. The Town paid a total of \$1.45 million out of the Open

Space Bond authorization (spring 2000 ATM) for the purchase of this conservation restriction. This was the second expenditure using funds from the Town's Open Space Bond.

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### **Willowdale – 40 acres – Map 50, Lot 2 – Gravelly Brook Road**

This partnership acquisition was completed in June 2001. Essex County Greenbelt Association was a key partner in this project that also included the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and the Town of Topsfield. This 40-acre inholding within Willowdale State Forest was slated for development before the project partners stepped in and successfully negotiated the acquisition. The project partners contributed the following amounts to the acquisition: Department of Environmental Management (\$1,400,000), Essex County Greenbelt Association (\$700,000), Town of Ipswich (\$300,000), and the Town of Topsfield (\$100,000), for a total of \$2,500,000. DEM holds an 84% interest in this property, the Town of Ipswich holds a 12% interest and the Town of Topsfield a 4% interest, reflecting the financial contributions of the various partners. Because the parcel is part of the Willowdale State Forest complex, the partners have agreed that the property will be managed by DEM. This project was the first expenditure out of the Open Space Bond.

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### **Smolenski – 16.9 acres – Map 19D, Lot 5 – High Street**

In October 2000 the Smolenskis offered to sell their property to the Town for \$29,900. This landlocked parcel abuts Country Club property and municipally owned Dow Brook watershed land. While this property was not originally included on the “list of priority parcels” for which Bond funds could be expended, it does have value as wildlife habitat and value as additional protection for the Dow Brook Reservoir. Given the reasonable offer price of \$1,758/acre and the public values that would be protected with an acquisition, the Town agreed to move forward with the purchase. The spring 2001 ATM approved the addition of this parcel to the “list of priority parcels”.

The Town acquired this property on January 31, 2002. The Town also received a grant from the Department of Environmental Protection to cover 80% of the acquisition price. After this reimbursement, the Town's total cost for this property was \$12,140.

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### **Ross – 29.5 acres – Map 21, Lot 104 – 9 Maria Drive**

In September 2001, the Town received a “Notice of Intent to Sell” under Chapter 61A for the Ross property off of Maria Drive. Since this parcel may provide a site for the relocation of “Brown's Well” off of Route 1A and therefore has significant public benefit in addition to the wildlife habitat and potential public trail network that it provides, the Open Space Committee and Department of Planning and Development recommended and the Board of Selectmen agreed, that the Town should act on its right of first refusal under Chapter 61A. This parcel was added to the “list of priority parcels” for which Open Space Bond funds can be expended per the vote of the fall 2001 Special Town Meeting. The Town purchased the property on April 30, 2002. The Town also received a grant from the Department of Environmental Protection to cover 80% of the acquisition price. After this reimbursement, the Town's cost for this property was \$78,000.

### **Bush Hill Trust – 13 acres – Map 40, Lot 49A – 96 Pineswamp Road**

The tax taking proceedings for this parcel were begun on July 12, 1990 and completed on September 30, 2000 (decree of Land Court, Case No. 106358 T.L.). The back taxes totaled approximately \$6,000. This parcel was included on the “list of priority parcels” and because it had been targeted for acquisition for conservation purposes and was owned by the Town per the conclusion of the tax title taking, the Open Space Committee and Department of Planning and Development recommended, and the Board of Selectmen agreed, that this parcel should be transferred to the Conservation Commission. Article 29 of the spring 2002 Annual Town Meeting authorized this transfer.

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### **Dow Brook Conservation Area – 34 acres – Map 12, Lot 3A – 326 High Street**

Negotiations for the Town’s acquisition of this parcel began in the spring of 2002 and concluded with the Town’s purchase of the property in April, 2003 with assistance from a Self-Help grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs – Division of Conservation Services for approximately \$200,000. This parcel has over 800’ of frontage on Dow Brook, which drains directly into the Dow Brook Reservoir, a public drinking water supply, only 650’ from the property line. In addition to providing quality wildlife habitat within a regional greenway of over 3,000 acres, this parcel also provides a key link in the Bay Circuit Trail and numerous opportunities for passive recreation. After reimbursement from the Self-Help Grant, the Town’s cost for this property was approximately \$150,000. Public access to the property is located in a parking area next to White Farms Ice Cream on High Street, near the Rowley town line.

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### **Gaspar Parcel – 22.1 acres – Map 20C, Lot 3 – off of High Street**

This undeveloped, landlocked parcel located off of High Street is located less than 100’ from the Dow Brook Reservoir, a main source of drinking water for the Town of Ipswich. It is completely surrounded by town-owned land in an area that is managed for watershed protection and protection of the Town’s drinking water supply. The previous owners historically used the parcel for small-scale agricultural purposes. It was the last privately held parcel within the complex of municipally-owned watershed lands that surround the Dow and Bull Brook Reservoirs. The owners of this parcel agreed to sell the parcel to the Town for its assessed value of \$33,000. This parcel was an important acquisition for the protection of the town’s drinking water supply, and also provides important wildlife habitat.

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## **Turkey Hill Conservation Area – 22.5-acres – Map 41A, Lot 40 & Map 40, Lot 81 – 31 & 33 Pineswamp Road**

The Town purchased 22½ acres of land, now known as the Turkey Hill Conservation Area, on November 7, 2006. The property consists entirely of mature upland deciduous forest and includes the summit of Turkey Hill, the highest undeveloped point in Ipswich, from which the distant coastline in the area of Great Neck can be seen on a clear day if there are no leaves on the trees. The purchase price of the property was \$580,000, all of which was funded by the Open Space Bond. The Town is working to establish public access to the property by developing a parking area at the entrance to 27 Pineswamp Road. A 30-foot wide trail easement leads from there approximately 1000 feet to the Turkey Hill Conservation Area.

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## **Shady Creek Conservation Area – 44-acres – Map 53B, Lot 44 – end of Colonial Drive cul-de-sac**

The Town closed on the approximately 44 acres of land now known as the Shady Creek Conservation Area on December 20, 2006. The Shady Creek Conservation Area consists of forested uplands and wetlands, including over one-half mile of frontage along the lower Ipswich River, providing critical habitat to a very wide variety of wildlife species. The property includes several vernal pools that sustain species of amphibians unable to breed in any other type of wetlands. The purchase price of the property was \$110,000, with net cost to the Open Space Bond of \$35,400. The remaining funding came from the following sources: Commonwealth of Massachusetts Self-Help Grant (\$61,600), Fields Pond Foundation (\$8,000), and the William P. Wharton Trust (\$5,000).

Trailhead access to the Shady Creek Conservation Area is located at the end of Colonial Drive, with reserved parking on the west (right-hand) side of the road immediately before the cul-de-sac turnaround. Please note that the MBTA commuter rail line traverses the property north to south so that the parcel located on the west side of the railroad tracks is not accessible on foot.

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## **Great Neck Conservation Area – 85.5-acres (16 parcels) – Map 15D, Lot 81C (Core Parcel)**

The Town acquired 85.5 acres of undeveloped land on Great Neck, now known as the Great Neck Conservation Area, on January 31, 2007 after more than two years of preparation and negotiation with the former owner, the Proprietors of Great Neck, Inc. The primary purpose of the acquisition was the protection of highly sensitive coastal wetlands and wildlife habitat, especially critical to migratory birds, whose population is declining. The net cost to the Open Space Bond of the nearly \$1.7 million purchase was \$283,000. The remaining funding was raised from the following sources: US Fish and Wildlife Service National Coastal Wetlands Grant (\$846,000), Commonwealth of Massachusetts Self-Help Grant (\$500,000), Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (\$54,000), and the Fields Pond Foundation (\$11,000).

Great Neck Conservation Area's 85.5 acres are divided into eight geographically separated parcels, the centerpiece of which is the 67.5-acre Core Parcel beginning at the fork of North Ridge and Little Neck Roads. Access to the parcel is being developed with a Clark Pond overlook located on Clark Road and will be open to the public in the spring of 2011.

## **Lynch Property - 19 Acres - Map 29C, Lot 3 and 4A - 215 Linebrook Road**

On June 25, 2008, the Town purchased the Lynch Property on Linebrook Road for the primary purpose of drinking water supply protection for the Bull Brook Reservoir. Other important town goals, including preservation of scenic views and agricultural land, will be achieved with the acquisition. The property, owned by Ipswich residents Eugene and Phyllis Lynch since the mid-1960s, was sold to the Town by the executor of the Lynch Estate, Eugene Lynch's sister, Mildred Resnick, to honor the Lynches' history on the land.

The property was acquired at a cost of \$975,000, of which \$495,175 derived from a Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Drinking Water Supply Protection Grant. The remainder of the project cost was covered by the Town's Open Space Bond Authorization and the Open Space, Recreation, and Water Supply Protection Fund. The parcel has more than half a mile of frontage on Bull Brook and lies entirely within the Zone A and B Protection District for the Bull Brook Reservoir, a component of the larger Bull Brook – Dow Brook Reservoir complex which provides more than 50 percent of the water used annually by the Town of Ipswich. The property also is within Zone II Wellhead Protection Area for the Mile Lane well, a major groundwater supply source for the town.

Tim Henry, the Director of Utilities for the Town, confirms that “the Water Department considers this to be a very desirable acquisition. The property abuts hundreds of acres of protected water supply lands for the Bull Brook and Dow Brook Reservoirs, and is a key parcel for water supply protection purposes.”

In addition to protecting the town's drinking water, the acquisition of the property conserves the agricultural use of the Property (two fields of hay and field crops leased to a local farmer), scenic views along Linebrook Road, and an important mix of wildlife habitat including open field, wetlands, pond, and mixed forest. The property will be under the control of the Board of Selectmen acting as the Board of Water Commissioners for the Town of Ipswich.

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## **Maplecroft Farm Conservation Project – 247 acres (2 Conservation Restrictions and 1 Agricultural Preservation Restriction) – Essex Road**

In the late spring of 2008, the Raymond family, owners of nearly 290 acres on Heartbreak, Essex and Argilla Roads, approached the Trust for Public Land (TPL) to begin discussions about preserving their family farm. These entities then approached the Town, Essex County Greenbelt Association (ECGA), and the Commonwealth to assess their interest in being involved in the project. Negotiations with the landowners, led by TPL, took more than a year.

An engineering analysis looking at soils on the property and describing a through road between Essex and Argilla Roads showed extensive development potential for the property. Consequently, the conservation partners concluded that structuring a project that would buy development rights to the property (instead of purchasing the land in fee) was more viable. The subsequent appraisal of the property showed that its estimated fair market value after the restrictions limiting development were in place was \$5.4 million. In August 2009 TPL signed a Purchase and Sales agreement with the Raymonds to acquire nearly 250 acres of conservation restrictions for a total of \$5.1 million by February 2010.

Ipswich voters considered this opportunity at Town Meeting in the fall of 2009, and on October 19<sup>th</sup> the Town voted to authorize an expenditure of up to \$2.2 million from the Open Space Bond toward the permanent

conservation of the property. The Town's contribution, which ended up being \$2,070,000, was ultimately augmented by a package of funding sources that collectively made the project possible, including contributions from two state agencies (\$1,830,000 from the Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) and \$700,000 from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)), and \$500,000 in private donations raised through a campaign led by ECGA.

TPL structured an agreement for the purchase, management, and use of separate portions of the property. The final project, protecting 247 acres with restrictions, closed on May 3, 2010 and included the following components:

- \* an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) on 83.7 acres, co-held by DAR and the Town
- \* a Conservation Restriction on 17.8 acres of salt marsh ("Area of Special Concern"), co-held by DAR and the Town
- \* a Conservation Restriction on 10.8 acres, including the Raymonds Fields (soccer fields used by Ipswich Youth Soccer), co-held by the Town and ECGA
- \* a Conservation Restriction on 134.7 acres, co-held by the Town and DCR

Additionally, Essex County Trails Association holds a 1.5-mile trail easement across the property, connecting Essex and Argilla Roads, and Ipswich Youth Soccer holds a lease for use of the Raymond Fields for 3.5 years through June 30, 2013, renewable annually thereafter.

The conservation of this property has many public benefits, not the least of which is preserving the scenic gateway to Town along Route 133 and the view along Argilla Road to Crane Beach. Public access to the farm will be provided along the trail. Agricultural restrictions will protect significant farmland and prime soils and will continue to support hay and corn production and a herd of grass-fed Angus cattle. The land protected by the APR must be actively farmed and is currently leased by local farmers Michael and Mario Marini. Conservation restrictions will protect natural resources including surface water, salt marsh habitat, and drinking water quality for the adjacent Ipswich Town Well. The saltmarsh on the Maplecroft Farm property, including the headwaters of Labor in Vain Creek (also known locally as Gould's Creek), is of great environmental significance and is included in the Great Marsh Area of Critical Environmental Concern. The restrictions will also allow the continued use of the Raymond Fields for athletic and other special events, including soccer.

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### **Pony Express Fields Conservation Project – 127 acres (subsequently divided into 3 separately owned and managed contiguous conservation properties) Map 63, Lot 4 – 24 Candlewood Road**

Since 2005 the Town of Ipswich, through leadership of the Athletic Fields Study Committee and with input from the Open Space Committee, had searched for suitable locations for creating additional athletic playing fields after a shortage of publicly owned fields was documented. The Pony Express Fields, formerly known as Pony Express Farm, is a property that had long been a priority site for that purpose, and the Town, through the Open Space Program, had contact with the previous landowner on and off for nearly a decade to negotiate a land acquisition project for some or all of the property. In 2016 the property went on the market for sale, and

partnering with Essex County Greenbelt Association (Greenbelt) and Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) a deal was structured to acquire the property in its entirety.

The project partners negotiated a \$4.05 million deal to acquire the entire 127-acres. At a Special Town Meeting on January 24, 2017, Article One was approved, which allowed the Town to spend \$2,377,000 from the Open Space Bond Authorization to acquire a 30.2-acre parcel to be owned by the Town, which included the \$2.15 million purchase price, plus \$227,000 to develop and construct the athletic fields and supporting infrastructure. Town meeting also authorized the Select Board to sell a 2.5-acre portion of the land acquired, located at the corner of Chebacco and Candlewood Roads, to offset the acquisition cost. On March 16, 2017 the Town purchased the 30.2-acre property recorded at Southern Essex Registry of Deeds Book 35738 Page 305. The deed includes a vehicular and recreational easement granted to Essex County Greenbelt Association from the Town of Ipswich along designated portions of the property. A 2.5-acre parcel was subsequently subdivided from the property and sold as a single-family house lot in May 2018 for \$270,000, the proceeds of which were used to pay down the bond borrowing. The remaining 27.7 acres of the Town's land was placed under the care, custody and control of the Select Board for the purposes of recreation, water supply protection, conservation and agriculture, or for such other purposes as the Town may authorize by a two-thirds vote of a future Town Meeting. The primary purpose of the Town's acquisition is to provide athletic playing fields, four in the near term on the approximately 10-acre area of the former polo pony field off of Candlewood Road, and two additional fields, as the need arises and funding is secured in the future, on existing hay and agricultural fields in the interior eastern area of the property, adjacent to the conservation land now owned by Greenbelt and MassWildlife. Until which time those two additional athletic fields are developed, the Town will utilize them for agricultural purposes and/or the other purposes for which the property was acquired as specified by the 2017 Town Meeting vote.

The majority of the balance of the property, which was part of the larger land acquisition project, now owned by Greenbelt and MassWildlife, is publicly accessible and permanently protected from development. The Town contributed \$2.15 million to acquire 30.2 acres of the property; Greenbelt contributed \$1.4 million to acquire its 42-acre portion of the property; and MassWildlife contributed \$500,000 to acquire its 54.7-acre portion of the property