

Barrington Conservation Commission and Natural Heritage Committee
Selection Criteria for Land and Conservation Easement Acquisitions
September 19, 2005

Purpose In March 2005, Barrington residents approved warrant article 4 enabling bonding authority for land acquisition. The town can bond up to \$800,000 to purchase land or other property interests therein: "for the permanent protection of appropriate undeveloped land in the Town of Barrington" (See entire text of the warrant article at the end of this document). These criteria are intended to guide in the selection of which properties will be considered for conservation using the bond.

Purposes Checklist

To qualify for selection a property must meet ALL of the following criteria:

_____ The property is located in or partially in the town of Barrington, or has direct benefit to the town of Barrington. (If property is partially in another town, Barrington's costs will be proportionate to the amount of land in Barrington or the value of the property to the town of Barrington);

_____ The property protects the natural heritage and rural character in the best interests of the Town;

_____ Permanent protection for the parcel is assured;

_____ The property helps meets the goals identified in the Barrington Master Plan (particularly Chapter 2, Section 2D, "Natural Resources and Open Space");

_____ The owner of the property is willing to participate in the transaction.

Resource Value/Public Benefit Checklist

To qualify for selection a property must meet one or more of the following criteria (listed alphabetically). There is a strong preference for properties that meet more than one of these criteria:

Expansion, Buffers or Linkages

_____ Buffers, expands, or adds other conservation value to existing conservation land; .

_____ Provides greenways to connect other protected or potentially protected lands;

_____ Provides travel corridors for wildlife species; .

_____ Provides publicly accessible open space in a part of town that doesn't have much or any.

Habitat for Wildlife and-Native Plant Species

_____ Contains important wildlife habitat, rare plants or animals, vernal pools or exemplary natural plant communities;

Large Blocks of land

_____ Contributes to the formation or expansion of large blocks of protected land (which may be owned by single or multiple landowners);

Outdoor Recreation

_____ Is suitable for low impact public recreation such as trails for walking/hiking/cross country skiing and enjoying nature;

Public Access

_____ Property may be made available for public access;

_____ Provides public access to waterways for fishing, swimming or low impact boating;

Scenery

_____ Protects spots from which to observe scenic views;

_____ Provides scenic views that can be seen from public locations.

Water Resources

_____ Includes, in part or entirely, aquifer recharge areas, wellhead areas, surface waters, or other lands valuable for the protection of drinking water supplies;

_____ Includes, in part or entirely, rivers, shorelands, riparian corridors, floodplains, or important wetlands;

_____ Includes, in part or entirely, lakes or ponds;

Working landscape (Rural Character)

_____ Is actively and well managed for agriculture;

_____ Is actively and well managed for forestry;

_____ Has soils with important agricultural value (regardless of present use);

_____ Is an actively and well-managed water resource.

Other

_____ Provides other significant public conservation benefit in the best interest of the town

Funding and Timing Criteria

In addition to having resource values with public benefit, these additional criteria may affect the town's interest in a given property and its priority for acquisition:

Donation Opportunities

_____ The landowner is interested in donation, bargain sale, or other scenario that leverages town funds;

Funding leverage

_____ The project has high probability for additional funding from sources other than municipal funds;

Potential for Conversion

_____ The property has potential for immediate change out of open space.

Feasibility Checklist

Properties must also meet the following general feasibility criteria:

_____ The property is large enough to be significant for its purpose;

_____ The property contains no hazardous waste or other contaminants, or clean up of any such materials can be accomplished at a reasonable cost;

_____ The property is not infested with undesirable and/or invasive species that could interfere with the primary reason for protecting the property;

_____ There are no unusual or difficult management considerations associated with this property;

_____ Adjacent properties are not being, and are not likely to be, developed in a manner that would significantly diminish the conservation or public values of the property;

_____ The landowner does not insist on provisions that would seriously diminish the property's primary conservation or public values or the town's ability to enforce an easement and/or manage the land;

_____ There are no ethical or image problems associated with project;

_____ If the property is part of a development proposal, the overall project has a beneficial impact on conservation resources;

_____ Clear title to the property can be acquired in a timely fashion;

_____ This project is otherwise in the best interest of the town.

Final authority for approval of expenditure of funds and acquisition of property rests with the Selectmen. They have the right to decide for or against a property based on their most informed understanding of the best interests of the town. In other words, a property may appear to meet these criteria but not be selected, and vice versa.

March 8, 2005 - **Town Meeting Warrant Article 4:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate up to the sum of Eight Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$800,000.00) for the acquisition of conservation easements and/or open space lands by the Town, all for the permanent protection of appropriate undeveloped land in the Town of Barrington, and to authorize the Selectmen and Conservation Commission to act on behalf of the Town in connection with such acquisitions of conservation easements and/or open space lands pursuant to NH RSA 36-A, and to further authorize the issuance of not more than Eight Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$800,000.00) of bonds and/or notes in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Finance Act (NH RSA, Chapter 33), and to authorize the Selectmen to issue, negotiate, regulate and take all other steps necessary pertaining to such bonds and/or notes and to determine the rates of interests thereon.