



PRESERVING MAINSTONE FARM

Frequently Asked Questions

At Town Meeting in early April 2016, Wayland residents will have the opportunity to secure the permanent protection of Mainstone Farm by approving the appropriation of funds to acquire a Conservation Restriction on over 200 acres of the property.

What is Mainstone Farm?

Mainstone Farm is the largest remaining piece of undeveloped, unprotected open space in Wayland and one of just a few of such properties in the region. The Hamlen family has owned the property since 1872 and continues to farm the land and manage the woodland today. Mainstone Farm's 228 acres of land comprises approximately 89 acres of farmland, 124 acres woodland and four houses with their accompanying lots, as well as two reserved house lots all located at the top of the hill. The Town of Wayland and Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) are working together to permanently protect 208 acres of the farm and woodland acres.

Where is Mainstone Farm?

Mainstone Farm is in the heart of Wayland. Many know the property for its scenic vistas of ponds, pasture, woods and cows. On the north side, the Farm is bound by Old Connecticut Path between Forest Hill Road and Rice Road. On the east, the property is bound by Rice Road from the intersection of Old Connecticut Path to the beginning of the Mainstone Condominiums property. The southern border abuts the Hamlen Woods Conservation Area and other protected land surrounding the Mainstone condominium developments. To the west, the property is bordered by private homes along Forest Hill Road, Deer Run, Bridle Path and Shaw Drive.

Why conserve Mainstone Farm?

Mainstone Farm has long been a priority for protection by the Town of Wayland and Sudbury Valley Trustees. Residents agree the Farm has become a symbol of a bucolic life and semi-rural character of Wayland. By protecting the land, we can save working farmland and forests, preserve scenic vistas, protect wildlife habitat, protect water quality and provide opportunities for passive recreation. Unprotected, the property could be developed into over 120 house lots, which while generating tax revenue would likely place a burden on schools and Town services.

How will Mainstone Farm be permanently protected?

A common and effective way to protect privately owned land is through a Conservation Restriction (CR), which is a permanent restriction recorded at the Registry of Deeds. It stays with the property even if ownership of the property changes hands. A CR effectively extinguishes development rights associated with the property forever. The CR allows specific uses (such as farming and forestry) to continue into the future. In the case of Mainstone Farm, the landowner would voluntarily convey a CR to the Town and SVT as co-holders while retaining ownership of the property. The Town of Wayland and SVT will purchase the CR on Mainstone Farm, and together the Town and SVT will be responsible for monitoring the property annually to ensure that the conservation values detailed in the CR are indeed protected in perpetuity.

How much will this cost, and how will we pay for it?

The total purchase price for the CR is \$15 million. This price was a negotiated price informed by an independent appraisal done for the Town that valued the CR at \$17 million. Town funding for the project is proposed to come from Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds. The acquisition and borrowing will require approval at Town Meeting through Article 30 of the 2016 Annual Town Meeting Warrant. The Town will also apply to the State for a LAND (Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity) grant for reimbursement of up to \$400,000. Sudbury Valley Trustees is raising \$3.3 million of private funds, most of which will go toward the purchase price and will also help to cover the costs of providing long-term monitoring and stewardship guidance for the property.

Why would the Town and private donors pay for a CR when the Farm will remain privately owned?

CR's are an efficient way to permanently protect land primarily because they are more affordable than buying land outright. Also, CRs minimize the ongoing costs to towns and land trusts of owning and managing land. The owners of Mainstone Farm, at their own expense, will continue to maintain the property consistent with its current use and as delineated in the CR.

How did the appraiser determine the dollar value of the CR?

The Town's appraisal was conducted by Avery Associates in Acton, a company with broad experience working with towns to permanently preserve land for agriculture and forestry. The appraisal was based on a 128-lot subdivision plan that the Town commissioned from Beals & Thomas in 2011. Avery Associates tested two methods of analysis to come up with the "highest and best-use" value for the property and then appraised the value of the land after the development rights were hypothetically extinguished. The difference between those "before" and "after" values is the value of the CR.

If this project is successful, how will it affect property taxes?

Use of already collected Community Preservation Funds and borrowing against future CPA surcharges will have NO impact on property tax bills. CPA funds are already collected and will continue to be whether there is a Mainstone Farm project or not. If the Farm were to be developed into 120+ house lots, however, property tax bills could be impacted, because generally, under Wayland's current tax structure, revenue generated by a housing development is often insufficient to cover the cost of services and school resources for the new residents. And the cost of providing these services is perpetual.

Will the Farm be taken off the tax rolls once it's protected?

Mainstone Farm is currently enrolled in the Chapter 61A property tax program, which provides a lower assessment for agricultural and forest land. Because the property will continue to be privately owned, the landowners will continue to pay taxes, and since the land will be kept in farming or forestry, it will continue to be taxed based on the Chapter 61A assessed value.

Will the property be open to the public?

Trails on a portion of the property will be accessible to the public generally from dawn to dusk and subject to the posted rules and regulations just as with other conservation land in Wayland. Access will be for passive, non-motorized, outdoor recreation and educational activities. The forestland on Mainstone abuts the Hamlen Woods Conservation Area and currently there are trails between the two properties that are already publicly accessible.

Who will be responsible for maintaining Mainstone Farm?

The management, control, and security of the property will continue to rest with the landowners. The land will continue to be privately owned and the Town will not be burdened by the effort and cost of managing the farm. Together the Town and SVT will continue its partnership in monitoring and enforcing the terms of the CR.

Will any development be allowed on the property?

Yes. In delineating the area to be covered by the CR, the owners held out two single-family house lots for possible future development. These two lots, totaling approximately 12.7 acres, are on the interior of the property at the top of the hill and are not a part of the CR.

Additionally, the CR will allow for the construction of some farm-related structures, e.g., a barn or a greenhouse, to ensure that the property can function as a viable farm enterprise going forward. The CR outlines size and approximate locations of potential new farm-related structures.

Will Mainstone continue to be a working farm?

The Hamlen family fully intends to continue farming the land. Today, the Farm is mainly managed for livestock. This may change to other agricultural uses such as different livestock or crops to allow the owners the flexibility to maintain a viable enterprise. The terms of the CR will allow the Town and SVT to maintain the open views across the fields should the landowner be unable to do so at any point in time.

Will the Town have any liability for the property?

No. Massachusetts' law protects municipalities from liabilities related to personal injury or property damage that may arise by public use of open space or recreation areas. Furthermore, CR holders are explicitly exempted from liability under Massachusetts' environmental contamination laws. Environmental conditions of the property remain the landowner's liability.

What happens if the Town and SVT are unable to secure all of the funding?

If the article at Town Meeting does not pass and there is no town funding, then the project will not happen. Likewise if SVT's fundraising effort falls short, the Town and SVT would have to work to redefine the scope of the project, which would require new consideration at a future town

meeting. No funds leave the CPA account or are borrowed until all monies are available, all conditions have been met, and the transaction is scheduled to occur.

Why is borrowing over 30 years?

Preservation of Mainstone Farm is a significant effort costing substantial funds. The benefit will fall to those living in Wayland and beyond forever. Thus the purchase has been structured to take 30 years to pay the debt. This means it is an multi-generational project, so those coming to Wayland in the future also will partake in preservation this magnificent landscape.

How can I help permanently preserve Mainstone Farm?

Preservation of Mainstone Farm is a communal effort in which we all can be engaged by supporting the use of CPA funds to purchase the CR and by supporting SVT's efforts to help fund the purchase.

