

Trust seeks \$300,000 to help city with Echodale Farm buy

By **MATTHEW PILON**
Staff Writer

EASTHAMPTON — With the help of a national environmental nonprofit, members of the Pascommuck Conservation Trust are gearing up for a public fundraising campaign this month to help the city purchase the Echodale Farm.

The 164-acre parcel, located on Park Hill Road, is the largest working farm in Easthampton.

"We'll be commencing in July," said Pascommuck Trust board member Marty Klein.

The Trust for Public Land, a national nonprofit that works to conserve open space for recreational and environmental purposes, purchased the property in May for \$2.85 million. The nonprofit will donate \$800,000 in private funds. According to Trust for Public Land spokeswoman Kim Gillman, the \$800,000 was a private gift given to the Trust for Public Land and specifically for the Echodale purchase.

"That's what really got this whole effort started," she said.

The Trust for Public Land will be the interim owner while it assists the Pascommuck Conservation Trust in raising an additional \$300,000, a portion of which has already come in from grants, Gillman said.

While not in full swing, fundraising efforts have yielded several donations according to Gillman.

"We have a few pledges already that are seeding that campaign," she said. "We're just getting under way."

The city has committed up to \$650,000 from community preservation funds. The total cost to the city will be \$3.15 million once the transaction is completed. The city will have full rights to the land and the restriction upon it. The Trust for Public Land will move on to another project once the sale is completed.

"We'd like to protect additional farms in the Connecticut River Valley," Gillman said. "We don't have any permanent stake in that property."

The Trust for Public Land still hopes to acquire approximately \$882,000 (28 percent) of the \$3.15 million from the Agricultural

Preservation Restriction Program, which subsidizes farmers in exchange for non-development of agricultural land. Approximately \$504,000 (16 percent of the \$3.15 million) will come from the sale of the land to someone wishing to farm it. Whoever owns the property will be under a permanent legal contract with the town to not develop the land.

"The agreement is binding on all current and future owners," Gillman said.

With the help of the Trust for Public Land, Klein says the Pascommuck Trust hopes to raise the \$300,000 "by the end of this year."

"We're absolutely looking for volunteers," he said. "We're looking for donors."

Those interested in donating or volunteering can contact the Pascommuck Conservation Trust at 413-529-9594.

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Easthampton historian gave time, land and heart to his city

By Z. BEN FEDER
Staff Writer

EASTHAMPTON — Edward Dwyer — known as the man to go to with questions about the city's past — took a part of local history with him when he died Wednesday after living for two years with brain cancer.

To his friends, Dwyer was a true Renaissance man — author, local historian, land conservationist, columnist and community volunteer.

"Ed was really dedicated to community service and really a wealth of knowledge about the community," said Mayor Michael Tautznik,

To read three of Ed Dwyer's columns on Easthampton history, visit Gazettenet.com.

who knew Dwyer for about 30 years. "He was always there to provide information or assistance."

The Northampton-born Dwyer, 46, a 1977 graduate of Easthampton High School, leaves his mother, Margaret Dwyer, and a brother, Paul Dwyer, both of Easthampton, and two sisters, Mary Bancroft, of Chesterfield, and Margaret Gladden, of Geneva, N.Y.

■ See HISTORIAN/Page A4

Historian had pen on pulse of Easthampton

■ Continued from Page A1

Prior to his illness, Dwyer was involved on various city boards where, as a font of historical facts and stories, he provided a broad context for many legislative decisions.

After graduating with a history degree from the University of Massachusetts, he returned to Easthampton and joined a local land trust and historical groups, helped found the Friends of the Library group, and wrote a regular columns in the Daily Hampshire Gazette from 1995-2003 on aspects of the city's 220-year history.

"He could tell you all the history of the manufacturing industry of way back."

Roma Donais, Easthampton Historical Society

In 2000 he penned a 128-page book, "Images of America: Easthampton." The manuscript holds more than 200 photographs of the city.

"He was a dear friend, a fellow you knew that you could count on," Tautznik said. "It's difficult losing a man like that, someone who had such a zest for the community."

Dwyer grew up in the same Lovefield Street house he lived in as an adult. There, he developed his lifelong interest in Easthampton's history hearing stories of his forebears working at the town's factories.

Both Dwyer's grandparents worked in the mills, as did his father, who held a position for a time with the Rubber Thread Co.

"He could tell you all the history of the manufacturing industry of way back," said Roma Donais, a member and former president of the Easthampton Historical Society.

Dwyer served as president of the society in the early 1990s, and chaired the Historical Commission in 1993. That year, he

Historian's take on hometown lore

The following are passages from columns that the late Edward Dwyer wrote about Easthampton for the Gazette:

DOUBTS ABOUT A 1923 CRIME: "Wing Chin, who operated the Union Street laundry, moved his business to 65 Main St. in 1923. By the next year, he decided to return to China and Chin Yu took over the business. He did not have the job for very long.

On the morning of April 4, 1924, a Williston teacher went to the shop to retrieve his laundry. He found Chin Yu in a pool of blood with a pair of scissors sticking out of his stomach.

The laundry man was rushed to the Dickinson Hospital (now the Cooley Dickinson Hospital), where he was operated on and was stitched up. Chin Yu said that he had been attacked by a Chinese man. In a later story, he claimed that this had been an assassination attempt done by the Tong, a secret Asian organization sometimes associated with crime. Authorities did not put much credibility in either story."

— Sept. 1, 1995

PATH TO A PULITZER: "In the late '20s, with the aviation industry still in its infancy, and hopes for a successful trans-Atlantic crossing appearing imminent, Lauren Dwight Lyman, a former Easthampton resident, became one of the first aviation journalists.

Eventually, Lyman was awarded a Pulitzer Prize and was recognized as one of the best journalists in the country."

— Dec. 24, 1997

A FRIGHTENING PANDEMIC: "In the fall and winter of 1918, 52 Easthampton residents died due to the destructive influenza pandemic — or widespread epidemic — that swept the world.

High school teacher Mary Newton was one of the first Easthampton residents to die of the virus, which destroyed air sacs in the lungs. She was born April 25, 1890, in West Boylston. The family moved to the town of Oxford, following the purchase of their property located in a section of West Boylston used for the construction of the Wachusett Reservoir."

— Sept. 19, 1998

played a part in using \$12,000, half of which was a state grant, to survey and document the historic significance of the houses, mills and churches in town.

"He was a great historian," said Donais, adding that behind his shy and quiet demeanor, he was "someone you could always depend on ... so honest and sincere."

At the society, Dwyer established the Industrial Room, where research materials on the city can be found. According to the society, the room will be dedicated in Dwyer's memory.

In 1981, Dwyer joined the Pascommuck Conservation

Commission, serving as treasurer for most of his time there. With the land trust, he donated an acre of land behind his home near the Manhan River called the Dwyer Conservation Area, and a \$1,000 gift six months ago.

"Saving land was very important to Ed," said trust member Susan Walz.

She said the trust plans to create a trail named after Dwyer somewhere in the 40-acre Manhan River Conservation Area, near his house.

The Pascommuck Land Trust motto, said Walz, is "preserving our past and protecting our future." For Dwyer, she said, "his two interests dovetailed nicely."

Edward J. Dwyer, historian of Easthampton

EASTHAMPTON — Edward J. Dwyer, 46, of Lovefield Street, died Wednesday, April 19, at the Calvin Coolidge Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Northampton after a two-year battle with a brain tumor.

Born in Northampton on July 1, 1959, he was the son of Margaret (Laurion) Dwyer of Easthampton and the late John W. Dwyer.

He was an intake worker for the Massachusetts Department of Health in Springfield, where he had served for 20 years.

A 1977 graduate of Easthampton High School, he later received his bachelor of science degree in history from the University of Massachusetts in 1981.

Edward was a member and past treasurer of the Easthampton

Pascommuck Conservation Commission and had donated to the commission land along the Manhan River, known as the Greenbelt.

Edward was an active member of the Easthampton Historical Society, serving as vice president, historian, past president and treasurer. He was a great asset to the society and with his hard work he produced the Industrial Room, which will be dedicated in his memory.

He was author of the book "Images of America Easthampton" and was also working on a new historical manuscript of Easthampton until his health failed him.

Readers of the Daily Hampshire Gazette may also recognize him as the author of "Through the Years," a regular column that chronicles the history of Easthampton.

He was a member of the Easthampton Knights of Columbus 1116, a communicant of the Immaculate Conception Church in Easthampton, and was a member of the church's Men's Club.

Besides his mother, he leaves his brother Paul Dwyer, of Easthampton; two sisters, Mary Bancroft, of Chesterfield, and Margaret Gladden, of Geneva, N.Y.; and five nephews.

He was predeceased by his brother John Michael Dwyer, who died in 2003.

The funeral will be Saturday at 9 a.m. in the Boucher-O'Brien Funeral Home, 7 Pleasant St., followed by a Mass of Christian burial at 10 a.m. at the Immaculate Conception Church.

Burial will be in St. Brigid's Cemetery in Hadley.

Calling hours are Friday from 4 to 7 p.m.

Donations in his memory may be made to the Easthampton Historical Society, 7 Holyoke St., Easthampton, 01027, or to the Pascommuck Conservation Trust, P.O. Box 806, Easthampton, 01027.

Sue Ann Morrow

University Statehouse Program

11/12/07

Trust's long fight for land celebrated

By MATT PILON
Staff Writer

EASTHAMPTON — In the late 1970s, some members of local government were fed up with the majority's favorable attitudes toward new development.

"There was a void in concern about the environment," said Mayor Michael A. Tautznik.

Tautznik, at the time a member of the Conservation Commission, soon after became a founding member of the Pascomuck Conservation Trust along with several other members of the commission and the Planning Board.

To him, the catalyst for the trust's creation came when the Board of Selectmen at the time declined to purchase Nashawannuck Pond, which carried a \$1 price tag, from J.P. Stevens and Co. due to liability concerns.

"We thought it was important for the pond to become a focal point in the community," Tautznik said. "There was no interest from the owner to improve the conditions."

Selectmen's opinions on the activities of the trust, according to media reports from the time, ranged from dubious to downright disgusted, and they refused to reappoint Tautznik to the commission shortly after the creation of the trust.

But over the next five years, as trust members hosted pontoon tours of the pond highlighting impromptu garbage dumps on its eastern shore, public support increased.

Town meeting relented and in 1985, the pond officially became public property.

Several procedures have been performed over the years to increase the water quality of the pond. In the spring, the final piece of the goals set out in the 1980s — a dredging that will return to the pond to its former deepwater habitat — will be complete.

Marking an anniversary

The pond was the first of many successes for the trust, which on Wednesday will celebrate its 25th anniversary at the appropriately named Nashawannuck Gallery at 40 Cottage St. The event starts at 7 p.m.

Public perception has come a long way in the past quarter-century, said current trust president John Bator.

"In general, there's more people now who are realizing the value of open space," he said.

Indeed, a recent survey conducted by the Master Planning Committee showed that 69 percent of more than 2,500 respondents thought that development in the city was moving too fast.

The trust over the years has helped to conserve 650 acres of land and actively manages 190 acres.

It's been a success, current and past members said this week, but the work is not yet done.

"It's gotten easier, but on the other hand development has gotten more fierce," Bator said. "Our main interest now is saving what we can from development."

Not that the trust is opposed to all development, said board member Marty Klein.

"We're not anti-development, but there are special places, vulnerable places, and

Klein.
"We're not anti-development, but there are special places, vulnerable places, and places with critical habitat and farmland that we think are important to the community," he said. "It speaks to who we are and it brands us."

Fundraising for the trust's most recent success, the preservation of the 165-acre Echodale Farm on Park Hill Road, was entrusted to Klein.

That campaign, which raised \$300,000, drew 500 individual donors, businesses

■ See TRUST / Page B2

■ Continued from B1

and residents alike.

Klein stressed that the organization is by no means rich.

"We're really dependent on the support of the community," Klein said. "I think there's been a growing awareness over the years."

Looking to the future

Klein said that he views the next 10 years as "a window of opportunity" for the trust.

"We hope to protect the best of what's left," he said. "It's not something you can replace. You lose it and it's gone."

The trust seeks to replace several board members that it has lost recently and is looking to increase its membership as well.

"We need volunteers all the time," Bator said.

Anyone interested can contact Bator at home at 527-3584.

At the trust gathering Wednesday at Nashawannuck Gallery, Bator will give a virtual tour of the trust's 16 properties in the city. Snacks and light refreshments will be served.

Matt Pilon can be reached at mpilon@gazettenet.com.

City of Easthampton looks at parcel for preservation

By MATT PILON
Staff Writer

10/17/07

EASTHAMPTON — City officials are eyeing for preservation a 14-acre wooded parcel on East Street in which a local development company has expressed interest.

The parcel sits at the foot of Mount Tom and is connected to a larger block of open yet unprotected land that totals 112 acres.

Mayor Michael A. Tautznik, after consulting with the Planning Department, Conservation Commission, and Pascommuck Conservation Trust, informed land owners Margaret Papalegis and David Ciak that the city had a "serious interest" in exploring the acquisition of the property.

Since the land has been taxed under a recreational land classification since 2001, the city has the right of first refusal once the parcel is put on the market.

Tautznik informed the owner's lawyer, Alan J. Zedonis, that the city intends to utilize the full 120-day period allowed by law to reach

a decision.

The trust has offered the city \$2,000 to explore conservation alternatives and is approaching its nonprofit partners for help and support, according to a recent letter from President John Bator to several department heads and officials, who Bator urges to not release the right of first refusal.

The property is currently under a purchase and sale agreement for \$350,000 with local development company DML Development Corp., which constructed the Harvest Valley 55 plus/handicapped condominiums on the western end of East Street.

DML owner David Lepine did not return a call for comment as of press time Monday.

Tautznik said that it is still too early to say where the funding would come from or if the city or a land conservation nonprofit would officially own it, but said that the city wants to protect the remaining land along the Mount Tom ridgeline.

"We have a history of actively trying to protect the slopes of Mount Tom from active develop-

ment," he said.

The city has successfully preserved several parcels along Hendrick Street.

The eastern side of East Street, which abuts that the base of the ridge, contains mostly houses, woods, and pastures, but the western side has seen the construction of approximately 126 condominium units in the past several years.

The majority of those units were deeded for 55 plus/handicapped, which allows for denser construction. That factor played a role in a moratorium passed earlier this year on such projects. But other types of development are still allowed.

In a memo written to Tautznik last week, City Planner Stuart Beckley wrote that residents enjoy the eastern side of East Street for its "scenic vistas, active agriculture, wildlife habitat and trails, and links to public open space."

"While not knowing the intent of the proposed buyer, almost any

development would detract from the above community assets," he wrote.


A "critical 20-acre wildlife corridor tract" also lays directly to the north, Beckley wrote.

The city has until Jan. 5 to make a decision.

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Dinner and cemetery talk planned

CHESTERFIELD — The town's cemeteries will be the focus of a Historical Society presentation Thursday at 7:30 p.m. at the Congregational Church on Main Road.

Cemetery Commissioner Bill Jolly will speak on the history of the graveyards and what he's learned about them since taking

over the post last spring.

The public is also invited to a chef's choice dinner before the program, beginning at 6:30 p.m. at the church. The cost for the dinner is \$10 and reservations must be made by calling Peter Banister at 296-4333.

There is no need to register for the program alone.

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Land trust moves to preserve 14 acres

By MATT PILON
Staff Writer

EASTHAMPTON — With the city's blessing, a western Massachusetts land conservation nonprofit will attempt over the next three months to preserve a 14-acre East Street parcel on the slopes of Mount Tom from development.

Mayor Michael A. Tautznik on Thursday recorded the Valley Land Fund's assignment in the registry of deeds, effectively transferring the city's right of first refusal on the parcel to the nonprofit, which has helped to conserve more than 8,000 acres across the western counties.

It was standing room only Wednesday evening at the municipal building, as approximately 25 abutters, preservation activists and concerned residents packed into a first-floor conference room one day after Christmas to express support for preserving the parcel.

The city can do so by exercising or transferring its right of first refusal on the property, which is under a purchase and sale agreement with DML Development Corp. for \$350,000.

The city gets first dibs on the property because it has been taxed under a recreational land provision, Chapter 61B, for seven years.

Many who spoke at Wednesday's public hearing lamented the pace and scope of development on East Street over the past five years.

More than 120 condominium units have been built along the street in that time. Around 60 of the units belong to DML Development Corp., which owns Harvest Valley Condominiums at 273 East St.

No DML representative attended Wednesday's hearing.

"It has totally destroyed the view, atmosphere and culture," Lang Avenue resident John K. Watling said of recent development.

East Street resident Brian Greenwood said that development of his street has ruined his daily drive to work.

"I can't stand driving down that road much longer and seeing what's been done with it," he said.

Greenwood's wife, Shannon Greenwood, noted the declining views and vistas on East Street.

"They cannot be re-created by anyone in this room once they are lost," she said.

District 2 City Councilor Justin P. Cobb, who lives on East Street, said he was "wholeheartedly in support" of preserving the property.

Cobb, who made it clear that he lives across the road from the parcel, noted the wildlife he had witnessed there, including black bears and coyotes.

Also attending to show support for conservation measures were councilor Robert M. Harrison and councilor-elect Ronald D. Châteauneuf.

William Canon, a landscape architect who leads the Master Plan Open Space Subcommittee, suggested that a limited development "to preserve the greater whole" may be worth looking into. "I understand some of the economic pressures put on the city to balance between the myriad of costs," he said.

Several others, including Pascommuck Trust member Marty Klein, echoed their willingness to allow some development on the parcel as "a last resort."

Terry Blunt, a former Department of Conservation and Recreation staffer appointed by the Valley Land Fund to speak on its behalf, said the fund was ready to explore all options for the parcel.

"There is a nonprofit standing by to try to make this work," he said.

Blunt, a founding member of the fund in 1986 who now runs a conservation services firm, said he learned of the parcel in August when he was approached by its owners, Margaret Papalegis and David Ciak, who inquired about potential state interest in the land, which abuts the Mount Tom Reservation.

Blunt, who said Thursday he had not yet discussed further strategy with the board, could not offer details on what proposal would come forth.

Those options could include a fundraising campaign to purchase the land outright but could also involve working with the owners and using state or private money to preserve the parcel. Also, all or some of the parcel could be incorporated into the reservation.

Blunt, who said he plans to research other funding sources, said he hopes the land fund can reach consensus on a proposal "as soon as possible."

Group hopes to expose Easthampton's hidden treasure

By KRISTINA TEDESCHI
Staff Writer

7/17/07

EASTHAMPTON — If you weren't looking for it, you wouldn't know it's there — which is precisely the problem the Pascommuck Conservation Trust is trying to address.

The Edward J. Dwyer Conservation area, tucked away on Terrace View off Pleasant Street, is a 40-acre expanse of woods and trails nestled along the Manhan River. Fronted by a chain-link fence, the area recently underwent a facelift when over two dozen volunteers hauled out trash, cleaned up trails and installed benches for visitors to enjoy.

On Sunday, the conserved land will be renamed in honor of the late Edward J. Dwyer, a town resident who helped found the Pascommuck Conservation Trust 25 years ago. The brief ceremony is slated to begin at 1 p.m. and will be followed by a guided walk of the area by members of the trust's board of directors.

Marty Klein, a member of the board, said he hopes the event will not only honor Dwyer, but put the area on Terrace View on residents' radar.

"It's kind of a secret, but not by our choosing," Klein says. "It's really a pretty beautiful place. You get a lot of nice views of the river."

Scott Raymond of Easthampton, the lead volunteer in the improvement project, earned his status as an Eagle Scout when it was completed. Prior to that, he didn't know the land existed.

"I actually didn't even know about it until I started looking for an Eagle project," said Raymond, who just graduated as valedictorian from Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School. "It's beautiful."

"That's the reaction I get when I lead a walk on one of our properties," Klein says. "Oh my God! I didn't even know this was here!"

The Pascommuck Conservation Trust owns 16 different properties in Easthampton, encompassing

about 200 acres, Klein says.

Along with blazing, or marking the trails, Raymond and other volunteers fixed trail damage resulting from heavy rains and built and installed two benches, the second of which is located atop a cliff overlooking the Manhan.

"I actually moved the trail over about 15 feet in a couple areas and made it a continuous loop," Raymond says, which spans about a mile. Raymond said he saw lots of wildlife in the area too, including evidence of beavers.

"We were just very impressed with his presentation," said Susanna Walz, vice-president of the trust. "And we've had great follow-through."

The area, formerly known as the Manhan River Conservation Area, won't be renamed again, Klein says.

Dwyer, a longtime Easthampton resident, died last April after battling a brain tumor. He was 46. An active member of the Easthampton Historical Society and the Pascommuck Conservation Trust, Dwyer penned "Images of America Easthampton" and also wrote a column for the Gazette that chronicled the history of the town.

"And," said Susanna Walz, vice-president of the trust, "he was a nice guy."

Kristina Tedeschi can be reached at ktedeschi@gazettenet.com.



You're Invited!



On Sunday, July 22nd, at 1 PM, the Pascommuck Conservation Trust will hold a public dedication to re-name our Manhan River Conservation Area in honor of the late Edward Dwyer, a founder of the Trust. A guided trail walk will follow the brief ceremony.

Recently, we and many volunteers have installed benches and improved the trails at this 40 acre jewel along the river, close to the center of the City. This will be a great opportunity to see why we think this property is so special.

Meet at the entrance, on Terrace View, just off Pleasant Street.
Questions? Contact Marty at 529-9594.
We hope you'll join us!

Easthampton groups, property owner at odds

By MATT PILON
Staff Writer

EASTHAMPTON — Two land conservation organizations are calling on the city to help resolve a land skirmish on Lovefield Street.

The Pascommuck Conservation Trust and the Massachusetts Audubon Society claim a resident constructing a home at 76 Lovefield St. is infringing on their land rights.

The 3.25-acre parcel belongs to city police officer Richard J. Facticeau, who is building a house.

His father transferred the property to his son in 2004 for \$1, according to the Registry of Deeds. The elder Facticeau owns adjacent land.

Separating the parcel in question from the elder Facticeau's land is a swath of property — an old trolley line corridor and bridle path — belonging to the Mass Audubon Society.

The city has an easement on the dirt road to access a drinking water well. The problem, said Mary Shanley-Koeber, director of Mass Audubon's Connecticut Val-

ley Sanctuaries, is that Facticeau appears to be using the private road as his driveway.

This brings up land access issues for both organizations, Shanley-Koeber said, since hikers are allowed to use the road to access Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary land owned by the society, as well as the 19-acre Old Trolley Line Refuge land, owned by the trust.

"I am very concerned about our access to our property and the environmental impact of having this building go up," she said. "I strongly feel that city officials should take a look at this."

According to a Feb. 14 letter to various city officials from Pascommuck Trust President John Bator, the Facticeaus have allegedly discouraged hikers from using the corridor to access refuge land several times over the past 10 years. A police officer was even called once to question hikers' right to use the property, the letter stated.

Facticeau could not be reached for comment Monday and his attorney, Timothy O'Leary, declined to comment on the matter.

Zoning enforcement falls under the purview of Building Commissioner Joseph Fydenkevez, Jr., who started work at his new post late last month.

Bator's letter was copied to Fydenkevez who declined to comment when reached Monday.

2002 variance

The Zoning Board of Appeals granted Facticeau a variance in 2002 allowing him to have reduced frontage on the parcel, due to the fact that a floodplain on one side of the property limits possible building sites and because the city easement for the water department restricts frontage.

In the application, Facticeau states that he and his family have gained access to their properties in the past using the dirt road.

Facticeau has permission to have reduced frontage, said City Planner Stuart Beckley. But legally, he needs formal permission to use the society's land as his driveway.

A copy of the variance request from 2002 includes a map of the area, purportedly sketched by Facticeau. The map does not indi-

cate that there is a strip of land belonging to National Grid in between Facticeau's parcel and Lovefield Street, the public road.

This means that Facticeau's property, surrounded on two sides by private property, technically has zero frontage, Beckley said.

He would need either the society's permission to use its land as a driveway or the National Grid's permission to connect his parcel with Lovefield Street through their land.

The society's land lawyer, Richard Evans, has had several telephone discussions with Facticeau's lawyer about the matter, said Shanley-Koeber.

Seeking public access

Bator's letter states that "the Trust will urge that measures be taken to ensure that the public access — as well as the ability of the (Pascommuck Conservation Trust and the Massachusetts Audubon Society) to continue to own and manage [their] land in the public interest — is maintained and the public's right enforced."

The two organizations have

worked closely together in the past, said Shanley-Koeber. The trust has focused on protecting farmland around the perimeter of the sanctuary, which benefits wildlife habitats.

"If you surround those habitats with farmland, you magnify the effect for wildlife," she said.

In his letter, Bator outlines several possible ways, all involving financial compensation from Facticeau, to mitigate the easement problem.

One suggestion was that Facticeau fund the construction of public parking along the trolley line corridor, National Grid land, or at the city's utility building.

He also suggests that Facticeau could pay the legal work necessary to obtain permission to construct and maintain public canoe access to the Manhan River over the adjacent National Grid parcel, or to fund public or nonprofit acquisition of that parcel.

Shanley-Koeber called Bator's suggestions "reasonable."

"We wish to be neighborly but on the other hand, our land is very important to us," she said.

Council to weigh land preservation along Mt. Tom

By MATT PILON
Staff Writer

12/22/07

EASTHAMPTON — City councilors and planning officials are poised to consider a proposal meant to preserve natural scenery and both slow and guide development along the slopes of Mount Tom on East Street.

City Council Vice President Justin P. Cobb presented his colleagues last week with a proposal to create a Ridgeline Overlay District. He said he has heard numerous complaints from city residents who live on the slopes of the mountain along the street who say there are avoidable problems with minor erosion and runoff that he believes are caused by existing development.

"They are problems that could have been avoided by proper placement of drainage," he said.

Under the proposed ordinance, the Planning Board would act as a Ridgeline and Hillside District Review Board.

The ordinance would forbid the

issuance of development permits until the review board has determined that a proposal has adopted measures that minimize the impact on public views and safeguards to prevent flooding and soil erosion.

The board would have authority over any new construction, what are termed "significant additions" to existing structures, excavation of earth or construction of access roads, and the removal or destruction of trees in the district.

Cobb said that he had discussed the idea with City Planner Stuart Beckley, who took the elements of the ordinance from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

The timing of the proposal — just prior to the city's deadline to announce its right of first refusal on a 14-acre wooded parcel on East Street that is currently under a purchase and sale agreement with a local developer — is coincidence, he said.

The parcel is nearly directly across the street from Cobb's own home.

"I would have preferred to get it out a lot earlier," he said. "With all the development that has been going on in my precinct, a lot of people have talked to me about this."

While it could potentially scale down development and give developers more "bureaucratic hoops" to jump through, it is not aimed at stopping building entirely, Cobb said.

"It's designed to slow things down to the pace of government," he said.

Cobb said that he has considered existing homes already located somewhat high up on the slopes.

"I think they should be grandfathered in to a certain degree," he said.

Beckley called the proposed ordinance "another tool to protect valuable visual or natural resources."

David Lepine of DML Development Corp., the would-be owner of the East Street parcel if the city does not match the offer in the coming months, has not stated its intentions for the parcel.

Beckley said that the proposed ordinance, depending on timing, could affect any sort of condominium proposal.

Lepine proposed and constructed the Harvest Valley condominiums on the corner of East and Ferry Streets.

"It may or may not affect anything they want to do," Beckley said. "Zoning laws in Massachusetts always depend on when you file your plans."

The proposal has been sent to the City Council's ordinance subcommittee, whose members will meet with the Planning Board next month to discuss it.

Matt Pilon can be reached at mpilon@gazettenet.com.

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