

ARTICLE 16C: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to acquire by purchase or otherwise for open space purposes pursuant to the Community Preservation Program and to accept the deed to the Town of Plymouth of a Conservation Restriction or less to 7.4 acres of land, more or less, in the Town of Plymouth located between Long Pond Road and Morgan Road shown on Assessors Map 69 as Lot 71 (a portion of), 72A and 72B for \$175,000.00 and further that said Conservation Restriction shall be held under the care, custody, and control of the Conservation Commission and further the Town shall receive an easement to utilize the Community Building/Barn for Town committee meetings at cost with the permission of the Wildlands Trust, and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to accept said easement and authorize appropriate Town officials to enter into all agreements and execute any and all instruments as may be necessary on behalf of the Town to effect said purchase; and as funding therefor to appropriate from the Community Preservation Fund estimated annual revenues, fund balance, or reserves, and/or borrow a sum of money pursuant to G.L. c.44B or any other enabling authority, and to authorize the Treasurer, with the approval of the Board of Selectmen; or take any other action relative thereto.

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

CPC RECOMMENDATION: Approval (unanimous)

The Community Preservation Committee voted unanimously in favor of article 16D at their meeting held Monday February 13, 2012. The property was formerly known as the Davis-Douglas Farm, and is currently owned by the Bongiovanni family.

SUMMARY:

The intent of Article 16D is to improve access and connections to existing Town Conservation Land. In addition, the acquisition of the conservation restriction will improve trail connections from the Long Pond Road conservation area to the State forest to the West and Cape Cod Bay to the East. This would be achieved through connecting town, state, private and other public conservation land. The acquisition will provide the WildLands Trust of South Eastern Massachusetts the ability to relocate its headquarters to the Town of Plymouth at the location of Davis-Douglas Farm. A Conservation Restriction will be placed on the land surrounding the uplands. The Farm and the Farm House will be owned and used by Wildlands Trust as their headquarters. The farmland would be available to the public as community gardens, subject to rules and regulations established by the Wildlands Trust. The Barn will be rebuilt and act as a trailhead to the adjacent conservation land and also act as a community building. The Town of Plymouth will receive an easement to utilize the community building/barn at cost for Town sanctioned boards and committees, with the approval of the Wildlands Trust based on availability. The fee simple ownership of the land and all liability will be with the Wildlands Trust. The Town will only receive a Conservation Restriction on the uplands and an easement for access to the community building/barn.

PLYMOUTH COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

FALL 2011 / SPRING 2012 APPLICATION

Project Name:

DAVIS-DOUGLAS FARM CR

CPA Funding requested: \$ 175,000 (REQUIRED)

Total project cost: \$ 210,000

Category (check all that apply): Open Space / Recreation Historic Housing

Lot and Plat: 71 (portion) 72A, 72B

Assessors Map #: 69

Number of acres in parcel: 7.4

Number of proposed housing units: 0

Are there any existing deed restrictions on this property? Yes (please describe) No Don't know

Project Sponsor/ Organization: THE WILDLANDS TRUST

Contact Name: Scott MacFadden

Address: P.O. Box 2282 DUXBURY, MA 02331

Phone #: 781-934-9018 E-mail: s.macfadden@wildlands-trust.org

Applicant Signature: 

Date Submitted: 12/20/11

Application Requirements:

A complete application consists of this application page (the specific amount of CPA funding is *required*), along with the following:

1. A detailed description of the project explaining how your proposal benefits the Town of Plymouth and how it meets CPA goals and selection criteria outlined at the end of this application packet. Are there any special permit, variance or other approvals required? Are there any legal ramifications or impediments to this project?
2. A detailed project budget including any additional revenue sources. Will there be any annual costs to the town once the project is operational?
3. A project timeline.
4. Additional supporting information such as photographs, plot plans, and maps (if applicable).

Please send 11 copies (double-sided) of your application to: The Community Preservation Committee, Plymouth Town Hall, 11 Lincoln Street, Plymouth, MA. 02360. Applications may also be dropped off at the Town Clerk's office or in the CPC mailbox at Plymouth Town Hall.

The deadline for submitting an application is twelve weeks before Spring or Fall Town Meetings.

APPLICATION
TO
THE
PLYMOUTH
COMMUNITY PRESERVATION
COMMITTEE

DECEMBER, 2011

PROJECT: DAVIS-DOUGLAS FARM CONSERVATION RESTRICTION
(near east shore of Long Pond)

LOCATION: LONG POND ROAD
(*south of Clark Rd., north of Ship Pond Rd.*)

ACREAGE: approximately 7.4 proposed for CR
(*approximately 1.7 of the Farm's 9.2 total acres will be excluded from the CR*)

CURRENT OWNERS:

DAVID, JOHN, AND ROBERT BONGIOVANNI
(WILDLANDS TRUST WILL ACQUIRE PREMISES IN JANUARY 2012)
Assessors Map 69, Parcels 72A and 72B

ASHANTY TRUST
(WILDLANDS TRUST WILL ACQUIRE PORTION OF PREMISES LATER
IN 2012)
Assessors Map 69, Parcel 71 (portion thereof)

PROJECT SUMMARY: The Wildlands Trust (“WLT”) requests that the Plymouth Community Preservation Committee pursue the possibility of acquiring a Conservation Restriction (“CR”) on approximately 7.4 acres located on the west side of Long Pond Road, just south of Clark Road and north of Ship Pond Road. Henceforth known as the “Davis-Douglas Farm”, the site comprises one of the last remaining unprotected parcels of any appreciable size in the immediate area, is proximate to multiple conservation properties, including the Town of Plymouth’s recent acquisition from Plymouth County and an existing CR held by the Town over WLT’s Six Ponds East Preserve, and is slated to become WLT’s new headquarters in 2013.

The Davis-Douglas Farm provides one of the most scenic vistas anywhere along the Long Pond Road corridor, will be open to the public for a wide range of passive recreational pursuits, meetings, and other events, and is within an area designated by the Commonwealth’s Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (“NHESP”) as Living Waters “Critical Supporting Watersheds” because of its value as a buffer to nearby Long Pond.

The proposed CR meets seven of the CPC’s nine goals for open space acquisition projects, and would also be consistent with several of the goals articulated in the current Town of Plymouth Open Space and Recreation Plan.

PROJECT HISTORY: WLT was founded in Plymouth in 1973 as the Plymouth County Wildlands Trust. The Trust’s early years found it without a permanent home, and its nomadic ways continued until a prominent Duxbury resident, the late Helen Philbrick, generously donated her 5-acre property in Duxbury to WLT in 1994. Mrs. Philbrick’s generosity provided WLT with its first real home, an amenity critical to our growth from an all-volunteer outfit to a professionally staffed organization. However, as WLT has continued to expand its staff, programmatic initiatives, and land portfolio, we have exhausted the capacity of our Duxbury headquarters in all dimensions.

In a fortuitous development, several years ago the opportunity to acquire the historic Davis-Douglas Farm presented itself. In the Bongiovanni family for three generations, the Farm had passed into the control of the three Bongiovanni brothers, who grew up on the Farm but now reside elsewhere. Initial discussions with the Bongiovanni brothers were productive, and revealed a common interest in not only putting the land under the stewardship of a conservation organization, but establishing a legacy for the Bongiovanni family by creating a new headquarters for WLT. Further discussions culminated in an agreement that calls for WLT to acquire the Farm in January 2012, and an additional two acres from an adjacent landowner, the Ashanty Trust, sometime later in 2012.

WLT’s vision for the Farm is taking shape, and an architect was recently hired to conceptualize this vision, which will in brief include:

- The relocation of WLT’s headquarters to the historic home on the Farm
- The construction of a multi-purpose barn structure that will be used for meetings, WLT-led programs and events, and community programs, meetings, and events
- A stewardship storage building
- Community gardens that will be open to all Plymouth residents
- The Farm’s serving as a hub for a wide range of passive recreational pursuits, including providing access to several of Plymouth’s outstanding walking paths

WLT strongly believes that granting a CR to the Town will provide the Plymouth community, as well as our members and supporters, an unequivocal declaration of the depth and long-term character of our commitment to Plymouth and the Davis-Douglas Farm.

DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL: The conceptual CR plan included herewith indicates that the CR would encompass approximately seven acres, and include most of the Farm's Long Pond Road frontage. Therefore, under the 2.75-acre zoning overlay that applies to the Farm, the area proposed for CR could support at least two building lots, which given the Farm's appealing location and scenic qualities would likely sell at a premium above a comparable building lot in other locations.

NATURAL RESOURCES SUMMARY: The scenic open fields that characterize the Farm comprise the majority of its acreage. Its western buffer and northern and southern reaches are primarily wooded. Topography is primarily rolling, with some level areas concentrated in the approximate center of the Farm. Approximately 50 percent of the land proposed for the CR is within an area identified by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts NHESP as Living Waters "Critical Supporting Watersheds". *"In Living Waters, Critical Supporting Watersheds highlight the immediate portion of the watershed that sustains, or possibly degrades, each freshwater Core Habitat. Critical Supporting Watersheds are those areas with more immediate hydrologic contributions to Living Waters Core Habitats. As such, they represent the areas with the highest potential to sustain or degrade Core Habitats."* (excerpt taken from NHESP's 2003 publication "BioMap and Living Waters—Guiding Land Conservation for Biodiversity in Massachusetts").

LANDSCAPE CONTEXT: The Farm is situated within a sizable open space assemblage in the Long Pond /Halfway Pond area. It is just across Long Pond Road from a 240-acre contiguous block of open space owned by WLT and the Town, is proximate to several other conservation holdings of the Town and WLT, and is just east of Long Pond itself.

IMPROVEMENTS/ACCESS: The portion of the Farm proposed for the CR includes no improvements. (All of the Farm's improvements will be contained within a building envelope excluded from the CR). The excluded area will be open to the public, and will include a welcome center/barn accessible to hikers and others visiting the Farm.

WLT hopes to work with the Town in the future toward improving pedestrian access to the vast open space assemblage situated just across Long Pond Road from the Farm. At present, crossing Long Pond Road on foot is a potentially risky undertaking due to the speed of vehicular traffic along Long Pond Road. However, a pedestrian-activated traffic light located at the entrance to the Farm is one potential strategy to enhance public access between the Farm and the adjacent conservation land.

LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT PROGNOSIS: The Town's primary responsibility as holder of the CR is to conduct an annual monitoring inspection of the restricted property, a responsibility it already has for WLT's Six Ponds East Preserve just across Long Pond Road. Thus, the Town can realize efficiencies in monitoring both properties on the same day. In any circumstance, monitoring a CR is far less time and resource-intensive than the responsibility of owning and managing a property.

STEWARDSHIP ENDOWMENT: The Wildlands Trust is in the unusual position of potentially conveying a CR to the Town, as opposed to accepting CR's on properties the Town has purchased with CPA funds. Therefore, in keeping with standard practice, WLT ~~will make~~ a stewardship endowment contribution to the Town as part of this project.

ALIGNMENT WITH COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT GOALS FOR OPEN SPACE

GOAL 1: Preserve Plymouth's Rural Character. The Davis-Douglas farm's rolling fields and overall scenic beauty is a critical component of, and contributor to, the rural character of Long Pond Road between Clark Road and Halfway Pond Road.

44

GOAL 2: *Protect rare, unique, and endangered plant and wildlife habitat.* Approximately half of the Farm lies within NHESP-designated Living Waters “Critical Supporting Watersheds”, a designation afforded by NHESP to “a distinction afforded to areas that are adjacent to important water resources such as Long Pond, and help buffer them from adverse impacts.

GOAL 3: *Protect aquifer and recharge areas to preserve quality and quantity of future water supply.* The town’s acquisition of the subject Premises would help protect the Plymouth-Carver sole source aquifer, a vital natural resource.

GOAL 4: *Improve public access and trail linkages to existing conservation, recreational and other land uses.* The Davis-Douglas Farm directly abuts a sizable open space block on the east side of Long Pond Road that includes an important link in the Town’s evolving footpath system. Visitors to the Farm will enjoy the prospect of easy access to this trail, which will offer abundant opportunities for a wide array of walks, ranging from a brief stroll in the woods to longer rambles to attractive destinations such as Ellisville Harbor State Park.

GOAL 7: *Improve public access and trail linkages to existing conservation, recreational and other land uses.* The Farm directly abuts existing conservation land of the Town of Plymouth and WLT that comprise a critical link in one of the Town’s proposed walking trails as described above. The Farm itself will be publicly accessible for nature study and hiking, but perhaps more importantly, it will serve as an important trailhead destination and recreational hub (see below).

GOAL 8: *Enhance the quality and variety of passive and active recreational opportunities for all age groups and for people with disabilities.* The Davis-Douglas Farm will serve as a hub for a wide range of passive recreational opportunities. The Farm’s recreational amenities will include trailhead parking, a welcome center for hikers that will include restroom facilities, maps and other information, and guided walks led by naturalists in all seasons of the year. And given the proximity of Plymouth South High School, the Farm also offers the potential to serve as an outdoor classroom that could augment the school’s environmental and science curriculum.

GOAL 9: *Utilize open space protection strategies (purchasing development rights as an option to outright purchases of property) that maximize protection at the lowest public cost.* The proposed project would result in the Town’s purchase of a CR instead of a fee simple interest, and most likely at a significant reduction from the fair market value of the CR (contingent upon an appraisal) and certainly less than the cost of an outright acquisition. The Town’s purchase of a CR will thus be cost-efficient, and will ensure that the majority of the Farm’s acreage will be permanently protected and accessible to the public.

OTHER SUPPORTING INFORMATION: The proposed acquisition would be consistent with several of the goals and objectives enumerated in the updated 2009 Town of Plymouth Open Space and Recreation Plan, including:

Section VIII, GOALS & OBJECTIVES, pp. 100-102:

Recreation

- *Goal:* “Improve the availability and maintenance of recreation areas throughout Plymouth.
- *Objective:* “Continue to pursue the development of the following trail corridors and make information available to the public:
 - *Myles Standish State Forest to Ellisville Harbor State Park “Wishbone”* The Farm is strategically situated adjacent to the proposed route for said trail, and will offer the added benefit of trailhead parking and a welcome center that offers walkers information, maps, and other services.

Maintenance of Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitat

- *Goal: "Maintain the biodiversity and wildlife habitat in Plymouth."*
- *Objective: "Work with non-profit conservation organizations to identify, protect, and manage lands of significant ecological habitat value, including an overall assessment of priority areas".* Approximately half of the Farm's acreage lies within NHESP-designated Critical Supporting Watershed area, so designated because of its importance in buffering important water resources such as Long Pond from adverse impacts.

Scenic Views

- *Goal: "Maintain the existing scenic views in Plymouth that give Plymouth a distinctive sense of place."* The Davis-Douglas Farm's gently rolling topography and bucolic open fields have remained unchanged for over a half-century, and provide one of the most aesthetically pleasing vistas to be found anywhere along the entire length of the Long Pond Road corridor.

Historic Character

- *Goal: "Maintain the historic character of the Town and of individual villages that is found in certain open space land uses and recreational areas."* The Davis-Douglas Farm is an important component of the Long Pond community's historic and scenic character. The visual beauty of its scenic open fields have been enjoyed by generations of Plymouthans. The Farm also includes the Douglas/Bongiovanni home, which dates from 1880, is on the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Register of Historic Places and is believed to have been designed by the prominent Plymouth-born architect Joseph Everett Chandler. (The home will not be included within the area proposed for the CR).

PROJECT BUDGET

Proposed Sales Price for CR \$200,000

Funding Sources

Town of Plymouth CPC Funds \$175,000

Private Donation \$ 25,000¹

Project Costs

Due Diligence \$ 10,000² (to potentially include revision of existing survey plan, EHA, title exam, closing costs)

Project Total **\$ 210,000**

¹A private donor has pledged \$25,000 toward the Town's purchase of the CR, contingent upon the Town's contribution as described above.

²Estimated figure—some of the indicated due diligence steps may not be required, including a title exam, as WLT has already commissioned a title examination abstract that it is willing to share with the CPC.

PROJECT TIMELINE

- Submission of Application to CPC—December, 2011
- CPC Deliberations on Application/Vote—December 2011-January 2012
- CPC Site Visit to Premises—TBD
- Appraisal commissioned--TBD
- Due Diligence Initiated/Completed—TBD
- Town Meeting Vote on Warrant Article Authorizing CPC Expenditure on Project—April 2012 Town Meeting
- Closing—Would occur as soon as possible following town meeting vote

ATTACHMENTS/EXHIBITS

- **AERIAL MAP DEPICTING SUBJECT PREMISES AND ADJACENT OPEN SPACE PARCELS**
- **CONCEPTUAL OUTLINE OF CR AREA AND EXCLUDED AREA**
- **ARCHITECT'S CONCEPTUAL RENDERING OF THE FARM**



December, 2011

Protected Open Space Davis-Douglas Farm Plymouth, MA



Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS)
Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Information Technology Division

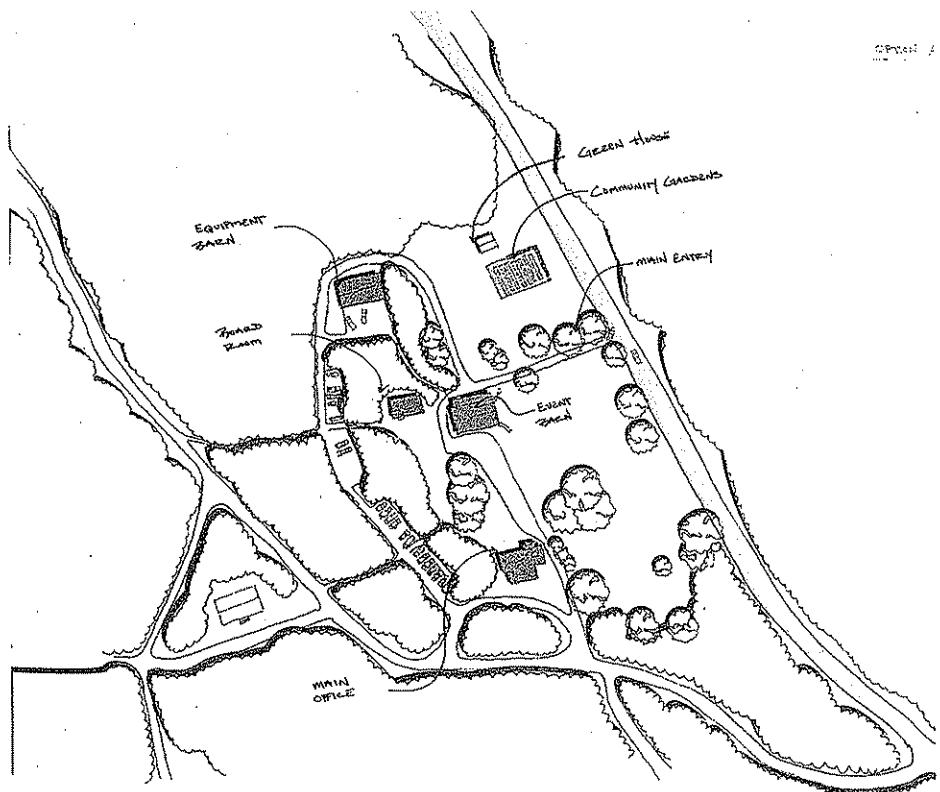
December, 2011

**Davis-Douglas Farm
Plymouth, MA**

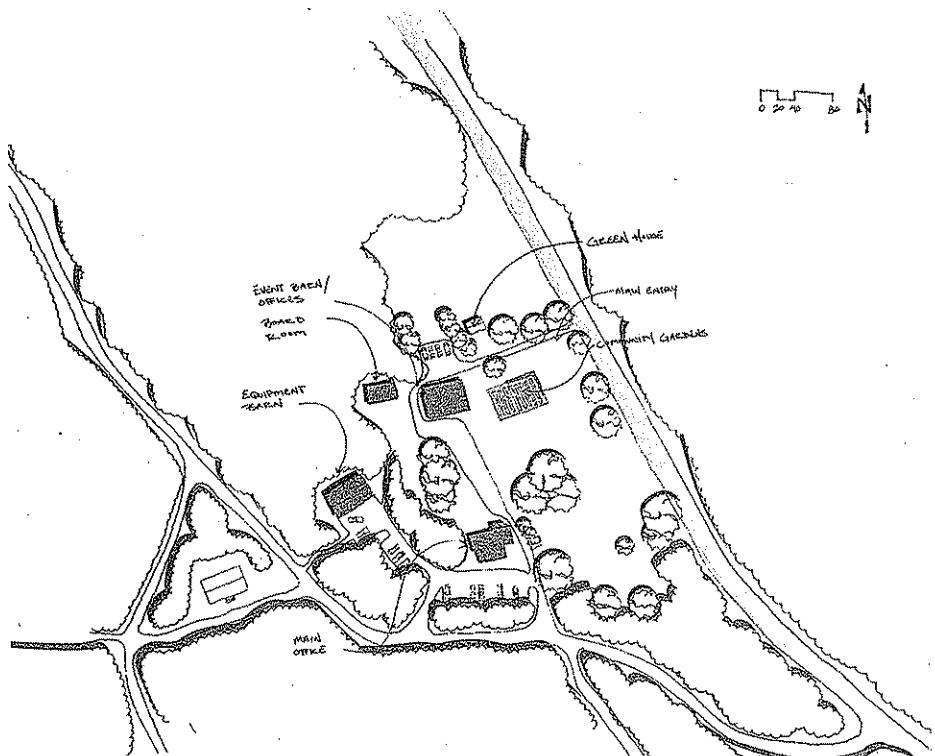
 Building Envelope (1.75 acres)
 Davis-Douglas Farm (9.23 acres)

0 0.025 0.05
Miles

54
DRAFT



OPTION A



OPTION B