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**Stewardship Plan
PROPOSAL**

for

Vigers Conservation Area, Pickens Street

prepared by

The Lakeville, MA Conservation Commission

APRIL 9, 2013

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I.

Foreword

In March of 2013, the Lakeville Conservation Commission reviewed "The Natural Resource Program of the Town of Lakeville, Ma, January 1970" as a precursor to on-site walks and planning meetings. On April 9, 2013, the Lakeville, Ma Conservation Commission presented a plan for both immediate and potential future recreational and educational use of the natural resources located on the town-owned land on Pickens Street in Lakeville, Massachusetts. This plan records the decisions of the Lakeville Conservation Commission on the development and future use of these properties.

II.

Introduction

The purpose of this plan is to outline a simple and low-maintenance program to develop the natural resource potentials of town-owned land on Pickens Street in Lakeville, Massachusetts for conservation and recreation use. In general, this plan should be considered a living guide so development can proceed with minimum of conflict, and allow for revisions and conditioning of work as conflicts arise. Certain features, such as walking trails and bench positions, will need final layout made on-site, and require approvals from the Lakeville Conservation Commission before work can commence.

This proposal has been created with the parameter that no town funds will be required for development of the parks, and all work shall be derived from volunteer-based efforts and donations, which shall be monitored and regulated through the Lakeville, Ma Conservation Commission. Since no town funds will be accessed for work on-site, all work is contingent solely on the approval of the the Lakeville, Ma Conservation Commission. There may be rare instances when town services are required to remedy issues from abutting town property, such as the removal of debris created by street plowing. Those issues as well as routine monthly reports will be presented to the Town of Lakeville by the Lakeville, Ma Conservation Commission and are subject to discussions and reviews as required by the Open Meeting Law of Massachusetts.

III.

General Considerations

A. Site conditions

"The Pickens Street property is at the junction of Hill and Pickens streets, about 1.7 miles southwest of the junction of routes 18 and 105. It covers approximately 103 acres of which [x-12] acres are open fields. Woody vegetation covers the remainder. Route 140 forms the west boundary." (Adapted from The Natural Resource Program of the Town of Lakeville, Ma, January 1970.)

Of particular interest on the Pickens Street property is a currently unregistered, cold-water stream, and a currently uncertified, vernal pool. Additionally, there are rock walls in need of restoration.

Accumulations of dirt, broken asphalt, and miscellaneous road debris are present along the bordering roadways at the intersection of Pickens and Hill Streets. There is an old boy scouts' building, now condemned but with a salvageable granite foundation, which marks the intersection and parking area on Pickens Street.

The open fields are being encroached upon by cedar and white pine. Soils are variable while a rock outcrop is present between tract I and tract II. (See Soil Map and Soil Descriptions.)

IV.

Proposed Facilities

- A. Picnic area
- B. Playworks and "secret" paths
- C. Pavilion for outdoor theater, concerts, and shaded sitting area
- D. Nature study, streamside seating
- E. Clearing at the foot of the hill
- F. Main path to top of hill
- G. Nature study, vernal pool seating ?
- H. Scouts camping
- I. Nature trails
- J. Timber Stand Improvement
- K. Parking
- L. Other considerations
- M. Order of priorities

- A. Picnic Area: In a nearly circular clearing to the west of Hill Street and the old boy scouts' building and the north of Pickens Street, there is a level, open field of roughly one acre, which lends itself to picnicking, play, and nature exploration.

Families may use this area immediately without any further improvements, although picnic tables added at a later date would be ideal. If on a future date, tables could be strategically placed around the perimeter of the clearing, the center could remain available area for play, and room for picnic blankets could be reserved for any events involving a pavilion. It is possible a future porta-john service might be somehow funded through fundraising or donations.

A sign would need to be installed. The conditions of park use would be stated on the sign, and would include a "take home what you bring with you" policy. Trash cans may not be beneficial as they encourage dumping, except under the condition that the town is willing to include the park barrels on its park service route.

- B. Playworks and "secret" paths: Wooded area immediately surrounding the picnic area lends itself to nature play. A path is already in place, which could be improved upon for children to disappear into plain sight of their guardians. A few natural "loose parts" could be added to initiate discovery and exploration all of which would be maintained by Friends and regulated by the Open Space Committee. These items could include one or two log (walks), a viewing platform in a low tree branch, and some pieces and parts in the cover just behind the old boy scouts building.
- C. Pavilion for outdoor theater, concerts, and shaded sitting area: The old boy scouts' building has been virtually abandoned and deemed beyond repair. It

would best be removed by burning, which would need to be conducted by the Lakeville Fire Department. A cleanup and inspection would follow, made by volunteers, perhaps a new group such as a "Friends of Vigor's Park" group, and a (donated) temporary gazebo could be erected for immediate use. Plans to install a permanent pavilion could begin though approvals made by the Lakeville, Ma Conservation Commission, and are subject to town building rules and regulations.

Summer programs, such as outdoor concerts and informal theater productions, could be held on the foundation of the pavilion. The Lakeville Public Library, which is located only a few miles away, could be a resource for attracting such events. An end-of-the-summer production could be requested through the children's' library or Friends of Vigers Park. Drama and music groups could also be made aware of park plans with the intent of increasing pavilion use and possible fundraising awareness.

- D. Nature study, streamside seating: An unregistered stream borders the western perimeter of the picnic area. A split log bench along the river but away from the road would encourage visitors to study the water's edge.
- E. Clearing at the foot of the hill: On the other side of Pickens Street, across the street from the picnic area, are a large park sign and a clearing in the woods. This land is underutilized due to the fact that the sign displays the words: BOW HUNTING ONLY and deters anyone other than bow hunters from preceding any further into the park. A campaign to transition from a bow hunting area to a multi-use park would need to begin with a change in signage and need only address the older, top portion of the current sign. The dates of the Bow Hunting Season would also be added to the current sign. The property needs to be identified as property belonging to the Town of Lakeville, Ma.

The clearing in this area could be used to teach children archery. It could be used for play events, nature study, short term camping, or any number of outdoor activities. It would be a perhaps more suitable and discreet location for a porta-john if such a service were to be brought to the park.

- F. Main path to top of hill: The largest or "main path" connects the Pickens Street parking area and two clearings on either side of the street to the top of the hill (and Pickens family cemetery). This path begins at the old "BOW HUNTING ONLY" sign, and proceeds through the woods along a large, uncertified, vernal pool. The path is studded with large boulders on either side, which could be cleaned up to accentuate the beauty and grandeur of this walkway. There are many trees across this path that would need to be cleared to make foot travel possible. At a later date in time, the path could be groomed to allow for the occasional camp vehicle to pass through.

- G. Nature study, vernal pool seating: An uncertified vernal pool is located near the head of the main path, only a few hundred yards from the street. Two or three split log benches around the pool but near the path would encourage visitors to study the water's edge. Signage would be desired to protect the pool from visitors who might be unaware of the vernal pools need for special care and protection. Guided tours could be conducted by the Lakeville, Ma Conservation Commission, or more specifically by the Conservation Agent. The tours could commence immediately whether or not the path improvements are complete. LakeCAM would be asked to broadcast from the vernal pool on a monthly, bimonthly, or even weekly basis. A nature group at the library or other Friends Group could certify the pool as part of an educational program, and also to raise public support for park development.
- H. Scouts camping: A Friends' Group of volunteers who work on the park may be interested in overnight camping in addition to other groups, such as boy scouts or girl scouts. The park offers an economical and geographical convenience to families as well as an alternative to larger, more complex camping arrangements. Here is an opportunity for young families to "try out" the idea of outdoor sleeping or make an overnight on a work week possible as home is never too far away to slip back into a weekday routine. The particulars for camping would be directed and regulated by the Lakeville, Ma Conservation Commission.
- I. Nature trails: Trails throughout the property have become overgrown, and will require site visits and planning in future Conservation meetings to restore them to a usable state. Volunteers shall be enlisted to clear paths to conditions such as those defined in the Department of Conservation and Recreation Trails Guidelines and Best Practices Manual, 2012. All potential trails must be first marked with flags. Expertise from the Conservation Commission will be requested to identify any habitats or vegetation that should not be disturbed. No cutting of vegetation should occur without consent from the Conservation Commission.
- J. Timber Stand Improvement (TSI): All TSI work shall be carried out under the general supervision of the Lakeville, Ma Conservation Commission.
- K. Parking: Additional parking is not anticipated for the immediate future.
- L. Other considerations: The Lakeville, Ma Public Library is only a few miles away and could be utilized to promote the use of this park and any programs or events planned at the park. A bulletin board showcasing park development and progress would be helpful to raising awareness and establishing momentum throughout the Lakeville area. LakeCAM could play a role in park culture. Also of interest might be a display at the local coffee shop with "a coffee in the park day" planned to reciprocate for any publicity raised through the coffee shop. An annual event planned in the park, such as an end of the summer, outdoor theater, would be a friendly way to turn public perception of the park away from "BOW HUNTING ONLY" and toward

a family-friendly, multi-use park. It is important that all uses of the park are supported, and this includes leash laws and related pet policies. A “no smoking policy” might be prudent given the nature of these woods, though enforcement is perhaps unfeasible. A little education along these lines would go a long way. For instance, a “tread lightly” program could hit the right note without coming across as overly vigilant.

M. Order of priorities:

1. Mark boundaries
2. Update signage
3. Remove pavilion
4. Register stream
5. Certify vernal pool
6. Expand on nature signage
7. Expand on benches and picnic tables

