

Casco Open Space Commission
January 28, 2011

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUDGET 2011 - 2012

In April 2010, the Commission made three budget recommendations: a Commission operating budget, the Lakes Region Community Greenprint, and addition to the land protection capital fund. The Commission acknowledged the Town's constrained funding situation and opted to hold off on the Commission's operating budget in favor of supporting the Greenprint planning process. The Greenprint plan will soon be complete, contributing important data, mapping capabilities, and regional coordination that the Commission will use in its open space planning.

The Commission now requests as follows:

1. Commission operations budget (\$3500)

The Commission is mandated by its ordinance to conduct community education and outreach, conservation planning, and research and development of open space protection mechanisms. Details of estimated costs of these activities are as follows:

Education and outreach

Fall 2011 workshop and public feedback re management of Town-owned lands
Spring 2012 workshop about vernal pools
Two mailings - \$1400 including printing
Production of workshop materials - \$100

Total \$1500

Conservation planning

Inventories of natural resources, protected species on Town properties
Consultant to provide management plan for Town forestlands - \$1500
Production of maps - \$200

Total \$1700

Land protection mechanisms

Develop conservation lease and other tools
Legal consultation (minimum 2 hours) - \$300

Total \$ 300

Capital request for land protection fund (\$30,000)

The Casco Open Space Commission requests the Town Meeting be asked to raise \$30,000 for the land protection fund. Continued contribution to this banking for the future is important and should be on the Warrant for the voters' decision.

History – Two plans previously approved at Town Meeting have supported this funding. The *Comprehensive Plan* in 2003 recommended \$20,000 annual funding so Casco could ensure adequate protection of wetlands, important habitats and other environmentally sensitive and unique natural areas. The *Casco Open Space Plan* in 2006 recommended \$30,000 be set aside for land protection, and it should be increased to \$60,000 and more

thereafter. The Town raised funds for land protection a few times, but last year it was not on the Warrant.

Purpose – This fund builds the Town’s investment potential. When important land comes up for purchase, the Town should have a fund so we do not have to raise the whole amount. These funds should aid with conservation easements, conservation lease payments, purchase of land and development rights, and to fund other open space protection activities. The Open Space Ordinance approved in 2009 at Town Meeting mandates these activities for the Commission.