

Memorandum for Cape Elizabeth Town Council Workshop
March 5, 2018 at 7:00 PM

TO: Cape Elizabeth Town Council
FROM: Cape Elizabeth Land Trust (CELT)
RE: Robinson Woods Preserve – Proposed Expansion –Town of Cape Elizabeth Contribution Request for \$281,666
DATE: February 20, 2018

Overview:

CELT has long appreciated the Town of Cape Elizabeth as an essential partner. This partnership has created a robust trail network, opportunities for recreation, and the open space that is so highly valued by and beneficial to the entire Cape Elizabeth community. CELT wants to continue this important partnership as it works to secure funds to expand Robinson Woods Preserve. Preserving and maintaining Robinson Woods Preserve, a significant natural area in a densely populated part of Cape Elizabeth, has been an ongoing project in partnership with the Town for nearly two decades. With this acquisition, the property would be expanded by 35% of the existing acreage. For the first two phases of Robinson Woods, the Town of Cape Elizabeth collaborated with CELT by providing funds for one-third of the purchase price. CELT is again asking for one-third of purchase price - \$281,666 for this 51.9-acre Robinson Woods Preserve parcel. This is an opportunity for the Town to participate in creating the largest (197-acre) permanently conserved preserve in Cape without assuming the burden of stewardship costs over time.

Details:

- Request to Town is 1/3 of \$845,000 appraised purchase price, \$281,666.
- CELT is under contract to purchase the property by October 31, 2018 with a potential six-month extension through April 30, 2019.

Benefits to Acquisition:

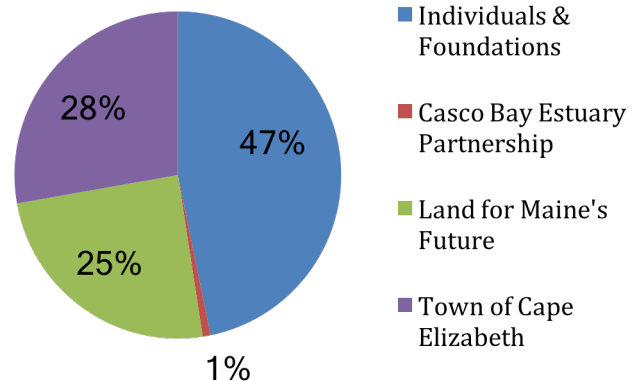
- Borders on the current 145-acre Robinson Woods Preserve.
- Adds an additional 1.6 miles of existing trails and the potential for new trails.
- Preserves an existing portion of the Cross Town Trail located on this property.
- Helps the Town implement their conservation priorities set forth in the *Future Open Space Committee Report of 2012* and the *2013 Greenbelt Plan*.
- Increases options for a universal access trail, so that people of any age with ambulatory issues can access the preserve, enjoy the vistas and study the habitat (top CELT priority).
- Protects the viewshed across the pond from the current Robinson Woods Preserve.
- Disperses trail usage across additional acreage. A study in August 2017 documented approximately 950 visitors per week to Robinson Woods. With this level of visitation, the resource has the potential to be negatively impacted by over-use as population and tourism grows.

- Guarantees non-motorized recreational access for residents such as pedestrian uses, mountain biking, Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, hunting (based on town ordinances) and dog walking (based on CELT policy).
- Provides easy recreation access from additional abutting neighborhoods – Olde Colony Lane and Beach Bluff Terrace.
- The Land for Maine’s Future board has already deemed this an important regional conservation property. CELT’s proposal to LMF had 13 letters of support including all local representatives to the state legislature and one from the Town of Cape Elizabeth (more information from this proposal is available upon request).
- Protects plant and animal habitat, as well as the watershed. (IF&W and USF&W reports for this property available upon request).

Acquisition and Stewardship Funding in Addition to Town Request:

- **LMF Funding:** The State of Maine Land for Maine's Future (LMF) program has, through a very competitive grant process, decided to support the expansion of Robinson Woods in the amount of \$250,000.
- **CBEP Donation:** The Casco Bay Estuary Partnership has deemed this an important habitat area in the Casco Bay watershed and provided \$8,000 in support.
- **Additional Acquisition Funds Needed:** CELT will work to fundraise any remaining funds needed for the acquisition from individuals and foundations. We will also use funds from our land acquisition fund if needed (\$167,750 available).
- **Stewardship Funding:** For any property acquisition, CELT raises an additional 20% of the purchase price for long-term stewardship, in this case \$169,000 for Robinson Woods Preserve expansion stewardship. CELT is in the quiet phase of a comprehensive campaign. Anonymous CELT donors have offered to match initial campaign gifts and any Town contribution towards this project with stewardship funding for CELT properties.

Project Funding Sources Including Stewardship



Protection Mechanisms:

- The project agreement in connection with LMF purchase funds requires the land be protected in perpetuity and is enforced by the State.
- Consistent with our ongoing partnership with the Town, CELT will provide a declaration of charitable trust and convey a public access easement to the Town.

Attachment:

Map showing location and existing trails.