

Conservation Restriction and Endowment Challenge

100, 000 Thousand Dollar Request

The Judy K Record Fund has offered an Endowment Challenge to the Belmont Conservation Commission. The Challenge offers a \$100K matching grant to create an endowment fund dedicated to support the preservation, restoration and maintenance of Rock Meadow, in return for the placement of a Conservation Restriction on the Rock Meadow property. To obtain this funding, the Town of Belmont would need to raise the matching funds of \$100,000 dollars AND establish a Conservation Restriction to protect the 70 acre Rock Meadow property.

The Conservation Restriction¹ would be similar to the one which protects the adjacent Lone Tree Hill property, and would likely be held by the same entity (The Trustees of Reservations) in perpetuity. The intent of the Restriction is to protect the recreational, environmental, and open-space values of the parcel. The restriction would ensure that Rock Meadow would remain a public open space and ensure the enduring protection of the unique natural attributes and conditions of Rock Meadow. The conservation restriction will ensure Rock Meadow remains available as a passive recreational facility benefiting the greater Boston Area, and ensure the land is maintained in a safe and environmentally sustainable manner to allow users to experience the walking, running, biking, birding and other opportunities found in the 70 acre parcel.

The matching grant portion of the project can be raised in several ways. The Commission can approach the CPA fund for seed money under the Open Space or Recreational category; private donations can be solicited from local businesses or grant giving entities. The proposal presented to Town Meeting in 2025 does not provide funding for the matching funds challenge – , rather they are intended to fund the work required to prepare the legal and environmental assessments needed for the Conservation Restriction for the Rock Meadow property, which will allow the Commission to accept the Judy K Record Challenge.

More specifically, the funds requested from Town Meeting would support:

1. Land Survey of the property:

- A. Boundary Survey to establish the property lines of the property with the placement of permanent monuments at all corners of the property. Additionally, the survey should establish the footprint of the wetlands and other mapped environmental resources on the property.

¹A conservation restriction is a legally binding agreement that permanently protects specific conservation values on land while allowing for limited, compatible land uses. It's a voluntary, perpetual agreement between a landowner and a qualified conservation organization or government entity, restricting future development to preserve the land's natural, scenic, or open condition

B. Topographic Survey of the property to establish the overall contours of the property as well as all existing and former structures that remain on the property. This will help with the establishment of the base line of the property.

2. Resource Mapping

A. Establish the boundaries of each of the regulated resource areas (i.e. wetland areas protected under the state Wetlands Protection Act) present on the property.

B. Review of current mapped resources associated with Vernal Pools, Protected Habitat, Woodlands, Open Meadows, Shrub Lands, etc.

C. Establish boundaries of other known habitats present at the property.

D. Mapping of invasive and non native plant species at the property.

3. Drafting of Conservation Restrictions and other legal issues

A. Engage Town Counsel or other legal representation to draft a Restriction that meets the standards of the Trustees of Reservations and the Judy K Record Fund.

B. Establish clear mechanisms for the use of funds from the endowment for the preservation of Rock Meadow, to be drafted by Town Council or other legal representation.

C. Establish clear accounting mechanisms to ensure the funds are invested appropriately to grow over time.

D. Work with Town Council or others to understand and establish Rock Meadow's standing in the eminent domain process, and implications of the Conservation Restriction on this process.

4. Establish an Existing Conditions Baseline to be incorporated into the CR at the time of approval by the state and the Grantee.