



2020 Annual Report

LAND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR LONE TREE HILL CONSERVATION LAND: (FORMERLY McLEAN OPEN SPACE)

Chair: Ellen O'Brien Cushman, Belmont Board of Cemetery Commissioners Appointee

Committee Members:

Radha Iyengar, Belmont Resident, Select Board Appointee

Lauren Meier, Belmont Historic District Appointee/ Carl Solander at year-end

Jeffrey North, Belmont Conservation Commission Appointee

Michele Gougeon, McLean Hospital Appointee

Tom Grimble, McLean Hospital Appointee

Andy Healy, McLean Hospital Appointee

Steven Kidder, McLean Hospital Appointee

Purpose and Duties:

The McLean Land Management Committee, created by the Memorandum of Agreement between the Town of Belmont and McLean Hospital, consists of nine members (Chairman Ellen O'Brien Cushman, Jeff North, Radha Iyengar and Lauren Meier from Belmont, Michele Gougeon, Andy Healy, Tom Grimble and Steve Kidder from McLean Hospital). The ninth member is a representative of The Trustees (formerly The Trustees of Reservations). The work of the Committee to maintain the Lone Tree Hill Belmont Conservation Land, acquired from McLean Hospital in 2005, is funded by the McLean Open Space Maintenance Fund created by the McLean transaction, by the revenue from the cell tower in the inactive cemetery land as well as by generous grants from local land preservation/conservation groups; it is not funded by property tax.

Summary of Activities and Accomplishments:

Sadly 2020 found more vandalism and graffiti at the newly stabilized McLean Barn. Though the security cameras picked up some of the activity, and a Police report was filed by the Chairman, the perpetrators have not been located. At this writing we are pursuing additional work to further fortify against break-ins and deter graffiti. In 2020 we paused the process of starting the community conversation regarding the future use(s) for this beautiful structure. We anticipate beginning the process anew in 2021 and hope to use the facilitator who was identified by Lauren Meier's search in 2019.

The Committee has reviewed all of the trails on property, implementing a naming strategy instead of the numeric trail designations previously used. In addition, we began the process of redesigning our on-site signage and kiosks to make way-finding easier, including sites of interest and trail maps and information available by GPS.

We are grateful to McLean Hospital for keeping our fire roads clear and open. Due to COVID-19, volunteer days were not held in 2020 at Lone Tree Hill to pick up trash and eliminate invasive plants; we hope this will resume safely in 2021.

Again in 2020 we had wonderful partners working with us. In particular, we appreciate the JKR Memorial Conservation Fund, that provided grants for the expansion of the Great Meadow by removing a large stand of glossy



buckthorn; removing and treating Japanese Knotweed and black swallowwort and removing stand-alone trees within the meadow. In addition, with their help, we were able to conduct additional trimming and removal within the Pine Allee, focusing on safety for our visitors.

During COVID, more people were venturing outdoors, and Rock Meadow and Lone Tree Hill were often their chosen destinations. An increase in the number of people walking Lone Tree Hill with dogs off leash rose significantly. We worked with the Animal Control Officer, Suzanne Trasavage, to issue warnings and non-criminal violation tickets and the Cemetery staff to report anyone using Highland Meadow Cemetery as a parking lot. The committee was happy that Lone Tree Hill could provide some peaceful opportunities during this stressful year.

Goals for 2021

We implement the overall goals, objectives and outline of work highlighted in the ecological management plans developed by BSC and Audubon Extension Service and trails plan prepared by Pressley Associates.

1. We will enforce the conditions of the Conservation Restrictions with abutting neighbors, particularly the Kendall Gardens neighborhood to ensure compliance and limit “bleed-over” effects both onto and from the property and the Belmont Day School along the landscape buffer to ensure that it has been appropriately planted and maintained.
2. We continue to employ our budget strategy when considering one-time endeavors and repetitive costs.
3. Working our multi-phase program to more aggressively manage the invasive and competitive plants onsite.
4. Continue to restore and revitalize and expand the meadows following the 2014 recommendations by Jeff Collins and Parterre, to restore meadows by mowing and selectively use herbicides.
5. We will work with the Town’s office of Community Development to develop a scope of work for a hydrology study and action plan for the erosion occurring on the Coal Road.
6. We will complete the review and installation of the new kiosks and signage to assist in way-finding on the property for those walking/hiking and riding mountain bikes on clearly designated trails.
7. We will engage in a broad community conversation and outreach regarding possible future uses for the McLean Barn

We want more visitors to the property; drive to Mill Street and park in the lot, walk or bike to the property and enjoy the trails, the nature, the sunsets, the peace and the vistas! Please “take a walk in the wild” at Lone Tree Hill, Belmont Conservation Land.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen O’Brien Cushman

Chairman, Land Management Committee for Lone Tree Hill, Belmont Conservation Land
(formerly known as the McLean Land Management Committee)