



## ***2021 Annual Report***

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

**Chair:** Ellen O'Brien Cushman, Belmont Board of Cemetery Commissioners Appointee through September 1, 2021

Tom Grimble, chair; Radha Iyengar. Vice-chair, effective September 2, 2021

#### **Committee Members**

Radha Iyengar, Belmont Resident, Select Board Appointee

Jeffrey North, Belmont Conservation Commission Appointee

Carl Solander, Belmont Historic District Appointee

Michele Gougeon, McLean Hospital Appointee retired October, replaced by  
Adriana Bobinchock in October

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 (through September 2021), Jeff North, Radha Iyengar and Carl Solander from Belmont, Michele Gougeon (replaced by Adriana Bobinchock in October), 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 monthly revenue from the cell tower located on the inactive cemetery land as well as by generous grants from local land preservation/conservation groups; it is not funded by property tax.

#### **Coal Road Rehabilitation – Erosion, Invasives, Historic Walls.**

Stantec provided a proposal for design and analysis including hydrologic analysis for the erosion occurring on the Coal Road. The Committee decided not to move forward with their proposal due to the high cost. We are grateful to New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) for performing hand work in the trench that overflowed its banks above Pleasant Street.

McLean, with trained crew and equipment will follow up on the eroded areas and the drainage ditch.

New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) was asked by the committee to install a reroute of the hillside trail at the bottom near the coal road



### **Northland Development on McLean Zone 3 Residences at Bel Mont**

Jack Dawley, Northland Residential, met with the Committee to present the proposed development: Subdistrict A with 40 for-sale townhouse units, Subdistrict B with 112 rental units, including bonus units for redevelopment of the Chapel building. The Committee submitted a letter to the Planning Board at the August meeting with comments and concerns including the effects of hydrology, stormwater runoff, lighting, landscape plantings, buffer and maintenance, trail head location to LTH, emergency response access, and boundary markers.

### **Summary of Activities and Accomplishments:**

Sadly, 2021 found some vandalism and graffiti at the newly stabilized McLean Barn. The barn doors were breached and there was graffiti on the masonry and on the wooden window covers. The graffiti was removed, the doors were refortification and security installation. The community conversation regarding the future use(s) for this beautiful structure was not conducted. We anticipate beginning discussions with the Historic District Commission in 2022.

New kiosks and maps were installed to assist in way-finding on the property for those walking/hiking and riding mountain bikes on clearly designated trails.

The Committee decided to delay the request by Greenway representatives to expand the Western Greenway, for adding length to trails and new signs connecting the property to Waverly Square as there was concern that it would encourage cut through bike commuters.

The Committee confirmed that Belmont Day School's use of Lone Tree Hill for certain recreational activities, such as, trail running, nature walks, hiking, mountain biking team activities can continue as these activities fall within the Conservation Restrictions. A set of conditions was agreed upon by the parties.

We continued our work on the invasives master plan and tasks that the Committee had Parterre prepare for the property, focusing on priority areas. We expect the work to continue into 2022 and hope to develop annual plans.



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Again in 2021 we had wonderful partners working with us. In particular, we appreciate the JKR Memorial Conservation Fund, that provided grants for the removing and treating Japanese Knotweed and back swallowwort and mowing of the property.

We are very grateful to Joe Hibbard a long-time Belmont resident with experience as a trained landscape architect, for his valuable volunteer work on the site to deal with areas where the buckthorn has grown. Joe has been concentrating on hand cutting in areas 7 and 9 where machines cannot gain access and in areas A2 and A7. He has cleared approximately 1/2 to 3/4 acres by cut the buckhorn at approximately 18 inches from the ground. Parterre then followed up by making a second cut right at ground level and applying herbicide.

We are grateful to McLean Hospital for keeping our fire roads clear and open. They also assisted in removing the diseased tree in the Zone 1A Woodlands Condo. The tree will be replaced by an in-kind native species.

Due to COVID-19, only one volunteer event was held. In May, Belmont Day School students removed garlic mustard on the property and pick up trash along Pleasant Street. We hope to resume organized volunteer activities safely in 2022.

In the spring of 2021, Belmont Day School conducted an inspection of the buffer with Highland Meadow Cemetery and Lone Tree Hill, removed ten dead plantings, amended the soil and replanted. We will continue to work with the Day School to improve the buffer per the Site Plan Approval.

During COVID, more people were venturing outdoors, and Rock Meadow and Lone Tree Hill were often their chosen destinations. 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 2022**



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 manage the invasive and competitive plants onsite more aggressively.
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 McLean Hospital to control the erosion along the Coal Road and to improve the surface of the Coal Road.
6. We will complete the review and installation of the new 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 the Historic District Commission regarding possible future uses for the McLean Barn followed by broad community conversation and outreach, when appropriate.

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,

Radha Iyengar

Vice Chair, Land Management Committee for Lone Tree Hill, Belmont Conservation Land  
(Formerly known as the McLean Land Management Committee)