



## ***2023 Annual Report***

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

**Co-Chair:** Tom Grimble; Radha Iyengar.

#### **Committee Members**

Carl Solander, Belmont Historic District Appointee  
Ellen O'Brien Cushman, Belmont Board of Cemetery Commissioners  
Mark P. Smith, Belmont Conservation Commission Appointee  
Radha Iyengar, Belmont Resident, Select Board Appointee  
Adriana Bobinchock, McLean Hospital Appointee  
Michael Macht-Greenberg, McLean Hospital Appointee  
Stephen Kidder, McLean Hospital Appointee  
Tom Grimble, 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 Radha Iyengar (co-chair) Ellen O'Brien Cushman, Mark Smith, Carl Solander and from Belmont, Adriana Bobinchock, Tom Grimble (co-chair), Steve Kidder and Michael Macht-Greenberg from McLean Hospital). The ninth member is a representative of The Trustees (formerly The Trustees of Reservations). The work of the Committee to manage and 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.

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

##### **Ecological Restoration**

Parterre Ecological Services was engaged again in 2023 to continue the restoration of certain woodland and meadow areas by controlling invasive plant species. In the spring, Parterre's technicians treated garlic mustard with targeted herbicide applications. In summer, invasive woody species were treated in and around the meadow while knotweed colonies were kept from spreading. In the fall, woody invasive species including tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), white mulberry (*Morus alba*), and common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) were remediated at multiple locations surrounding the Great Meadow and in the Eastern Woods. The Land Management Committee is very grateful to the Judy Record Conservation Fund for sharing the cost of all the work conducted by Parterre and to Joseph Hibbard for his guidance for the ecological restoration



The LMC retains other vendors to mow the Great Meadow and the trails. In the fall, the arborist firm Tree Specialists conducted maintenance work for the trees along the Pine Allee, including crown reduction pruning on 55 white pines and removing miscellaneous invasive trees and brush encroaching on the southeast border of the Allée. This work was made possible by a generous Judy Record Conservation Fund grant.

### **Volunteer efforts**

On April 22, the Belmont Citizens Forum (BCF) and the Judy Record Conservation Fund held their ninth annual Lone Tree Hill Volunteer Day. The volunteers included Girl Scouts Troop 82027, Cityside Subaru employees, M&T Bank employees, the Sai group employees, and citizens from Belmont and the surrounding communities. Many hands made light work. Efficient volunteers planted forty white pine saplings along the Pine Allee. These new trees completed the replacement of the Allee's missing pines and some of the saplings from the 2017-2019 and 2022 volunteer day plantings that did not prosper. At the adjacent meadow, the volunteers planted native wildflowers including slender-leaf mountain mint, short-toothed mountain mint, wild bergamot, white wood aster, blue wood aster, New England aster, and butterfly weed (70 plant plugs of each species). By season's end, these plants were starting to bloom.

At the other Pleasant Street end of the property, the volunteers collected twenty bags of trash, including rusted metal sheets and an old bed frame. Garlic mustard was pulled up and bagged in the same effort. The volunteers also closed an unauthorized bike trail and dismantled an abandoned improvised shelter.

On May 19, as part of the Belmont Day School Service Day, students pulled and bagged 16 bags of garlic mustard, supervised by Leonard Katz and Nancy Kougeas from the Belmont Conservation Volunteers group.

On November 5, 13 volunteers from BCF, LMC, and other Belmont citizens spread white pine wood chips along the Pine Allee. The wood chips were material from the white pine pruning work that was processed and left on site.

Most weekends in the spring and summer, Belmont Conservation Volunteers, a Sustainable Belmont working group, removed garlic mustard and other invasive plants at Lone Tree Hill, the McLean Barn and at an abutting area at Rock Meadow. They also pulled knotweed after rain storms, when the wet soil allows volunteers to pull the plant up to remove the roots with the stalks, thereby reducing the odds that the plant will resprout.

### **McLean Barn**



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The McLean Barn, also known as the Brick Barn at Rock Meadow, was conveyed to the town in 2005 by McLean Hospital following the 1999 agreement that created the conservation land now known as Lone Tree Hill. The barn has been largely unused since that time. On February 10 and March 3, the Committee gave tours of the McLean Barn to interested citizens in preparation for public discussions about the disposition of the barn and the best community uses of the space as allowed under the conservation restriction governing Lone Tree Hill land. A request for proposals for a facilitator to structure a public process for generating ideas for the reuse of the barn has not yet been issued. The LMC expects to issue this RFP in the coming year.

In response to several unsuccessful attempts to break into the barn by prying open the doors, the Committee engaged a security services vendor to close and lock the barn doors better. The Committee gave approval to the town to temporarily store lockers from the White Field house which are to be used by the town in the future. In early 2024 the Town informed the Committee that they had decided to store the lockers elsewhere.

### **Signage**

The Department of Public Works has installed new *no parking: fire lane* signs at the bottom of the fire lane Coal Road turnout on Pleasant Street. This signage was approved by the Fire Department, Police, and Select Board because unauthorized vehicles were parking in that area.

The Greater Boston New England Mountain Biking Association has donated new rule signs and signs for closing rogue trails. These signs will be installed in early 2024ly.

### **Goals for 2024**

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 would welcome having 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

Co-Chair, Land Management Committee for Lone Tree Hill, Belmont Conservation Land

(Formerly known as the McLean Land Management Committee)