



The Waterbury Conservation Commission held Meeting on May 21, 2024, from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm.

Present: Amy Marshall-Carney, Marcy Blauvelt, Malachi Brennan, Marty Johansen, Meg Baldor, Josh Lincoln and Mike Bard Public: Rosie Metcalf, Gannon Osborn, Gunnar Nurme, Steve Hagenbuch

A quorum was established. The meeting was called to order at 6:03pm.

Agenda Review & Modifications

- Agenda accepted as published

Public Comments

- Cordial introductions; No substantive comments were made

Waterbury Land Initiative (WLI) & Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation (FPR) - Gilpin Project

- Steve Hagenbuch (WLI) provided the WCC with a brief overview of WLI's facilitative role for this project. Gannon Osborn and Gunnar Nurme, FPR representatives described the proposed project, which involves the acquisition by FPR of two parcels totalling about 83 acres from members of the Gilpin family, in addition to a right-of-way on existing state land. These parcels abut the Perry Hill block of the C.C. Putnam State Forest and would be managed as part of that existing block.
- With limited project information provided in the FPR letter dated May 14th, Commission members asked a litany of questions about future use plans, the implications of those uses on the immediate community and the Town of Waterbury at large, wildlife implications, management class, on-going monitoring plans and economic impacts. FPR representatives stated no further details could be provided at this time. Furthermore, if the land acquisition was approved a public planning process would guide community involvement and future plan development.
- Due to the brief timeline, complexity of this project and the remaining business before the WCC we collectively agreed to close this agenda item and conduct a Special Meeting May 29, 2024 7p-8p.
- (Blauvelt) Motion to conduct a Special Meeting to further discuss the State of Vermont proposal to purchase the Gilpin Family property. (Baldor) Second, the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Prior Meeting Minutes

- (Brennan) Motion to approve the 4/16 minutes as written. (Blauvelt) Second, the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Hope Davey - Disc Golf

- Meg oriented commission members to long-standing unresolved environmental impacts within the Hope Davey disc-golf course and the [Waterbury Hope Davey and Ice Center Area Parks Master Plan](#) published July 2023. Most of the education and discussion was focused on the ecological importance of fully realizing the disc golf course adjustments proposed on page 34 Hope Davey Park Concept Plan - Wetlands Delineation Parcel Map. Particularly those sections identified as Class II wetlands. First steps including the movement of Hole 9 from the Thatcher Brook riparian area and

restorative riparian tree planting have been accomplished. Restorative planting in the Class II wetlands and invasive species control throughout the Park to restore habitat and ecological function after identified course adjustments requires further planning with the Town of Waterbury/Recreation Director. Meg further explained over the years various Waterbury municipal bodies have heard and acknowledged the need for an MOU between the Town of Waterbury as the land owner, and the disc golf's primary user - Center Chains Disc Golf, however one has not yet been put into effect. Boundary delineation to protect the wetlands, mowing schedule and extent of mowing, and adhoc cutting are among ongoing concerns.

- WCC members asked several clarifying questions, many of which sought to understand the clearly documented environmental concerns, master planning timeline and the historic engagement levels of decision making bodies.
- (Marshall-Carney) Motion for a member or members of the WCC, and in partnership with Katarina Lisaius the Recreation Director, to petition the Town of Waterbury Selectboard and Town Manager, requesting the establishment of an MOU with Center Chains Disc Golf, oversee course alterations that avoid the Class II wetlands. (Lincoln & Johansen) Second, the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Sub-Committee Update

- Agenda item not discussed due to length of Gilpin property discussion

Treasurer Report

- Agenda item not discussed due to length of Gilpin property discussion

Action Items

- Amy to draft 5/21 Meeting Minutes and send to Commission for final review
- Amy to schedule and warn 5/29 Special Meeting

Adjournment

- Upcoming meeting reminder - June 18th, July 9th, and August 13th
- The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:17 pm

State of Vermont
Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation
1 National Life Drive, Dewey 2
Montpelier, VT 05620-3801

Agency of Natural Resources

<http://fpr.vermont.gov>

May 14, 2024

Town of Waterbury Conservation Commission
28 North Main Street
Waterbury, VT, 05676

RE: Land Conservation Project in the Town of Waterbury

Members of the Waterbury Conservation Commission:

The Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR), in partnership with the Waterbury Land Initiative (WLI), is working to acquire 83.25 acres of land in Waterbury as an addition to C.C. Putnam State Forest. The project involves two parcels off Black Bear Hollow, both owned by members of the Gilpin Family. One of the parcels ("Lot 3") is 11.10 acres and is owned by Beth Gilpin. The other parcel ("Lot 5") is 72.15 acres and is owned jointly by Beth, Linda, and Rob Gilpin. Lot 5 is adjacent to the Perry Hill block of C.C. Putnam State Forest. In addition to purchasing these two parcels, FPR also plans to purchase a right of way that Beth Gilpin and her husband Mark Powell currently hold over the State Forest land. Collectively, the two parcels and the right of way are referred to as the "Gilpin properties." FPR is asking for the Waterbury Conservation Commission's support for this acquisition at your upcoming meeting on May 21, 2024.

The addition of this land to the Perry Hill block of C.C. Putnam State Forest will expand recreational opportunities while also expanding recreational and management access to the State Forest. Upon acquisition by FPR, the land will be open to the public for dispersed recreation. Conservation of these parcels will also provide the opportunity to potentially build new recreational trails and expand the popular Perry Hill trail network in the future. Further, conservation of the land will protect against forest fragmentation around the State Forest's edges and will expand the State Forest's ability to function as a large unfragmented forest block within the Worcester Range to Northeastern Highlands Wildlife Linkage, a regionally significant wildlife corridor. Vermont Conservation Design identifies the land as part of a Highest Priority Interior Forest Block, as part of a Highest Priority Connectivity Block, and as a Highest Priority area for Physical Landscape Diversity. Once acquired by FPR the land will be managed as an addition to C.C. Putnam State Forest.

The partners respectfully ask for your support of FPR's acquisition of the Gilpin properties. For your convenience, I have attached a brief letter to offer your support. Should you see fit to support the project, we use this letter to show town support as the project advances. If acquired, the property will be managed under an Interim Stewardship Plan until the Long Range Management Plan for the Worcester Range Management Unit is amended or updated to include the parcels through a public process. Also, please find attached a map showing the location of the parcels.

Thank you and please feel free to reach out with thoughts or questions at any time.

Gunnar Nurme, Land Acquisition Coordinator

Town of Waterbury Conservation Commission
28 North Main Street
Waterbury, VT, 05676

June 3, 2024

Gunnar Nurme
Land Acquisition Coordinator
Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation
1 National Life Drive, Davis 2
Montpelier, VT 05602

RE: Land Conservation Project in the Town of Waterbury

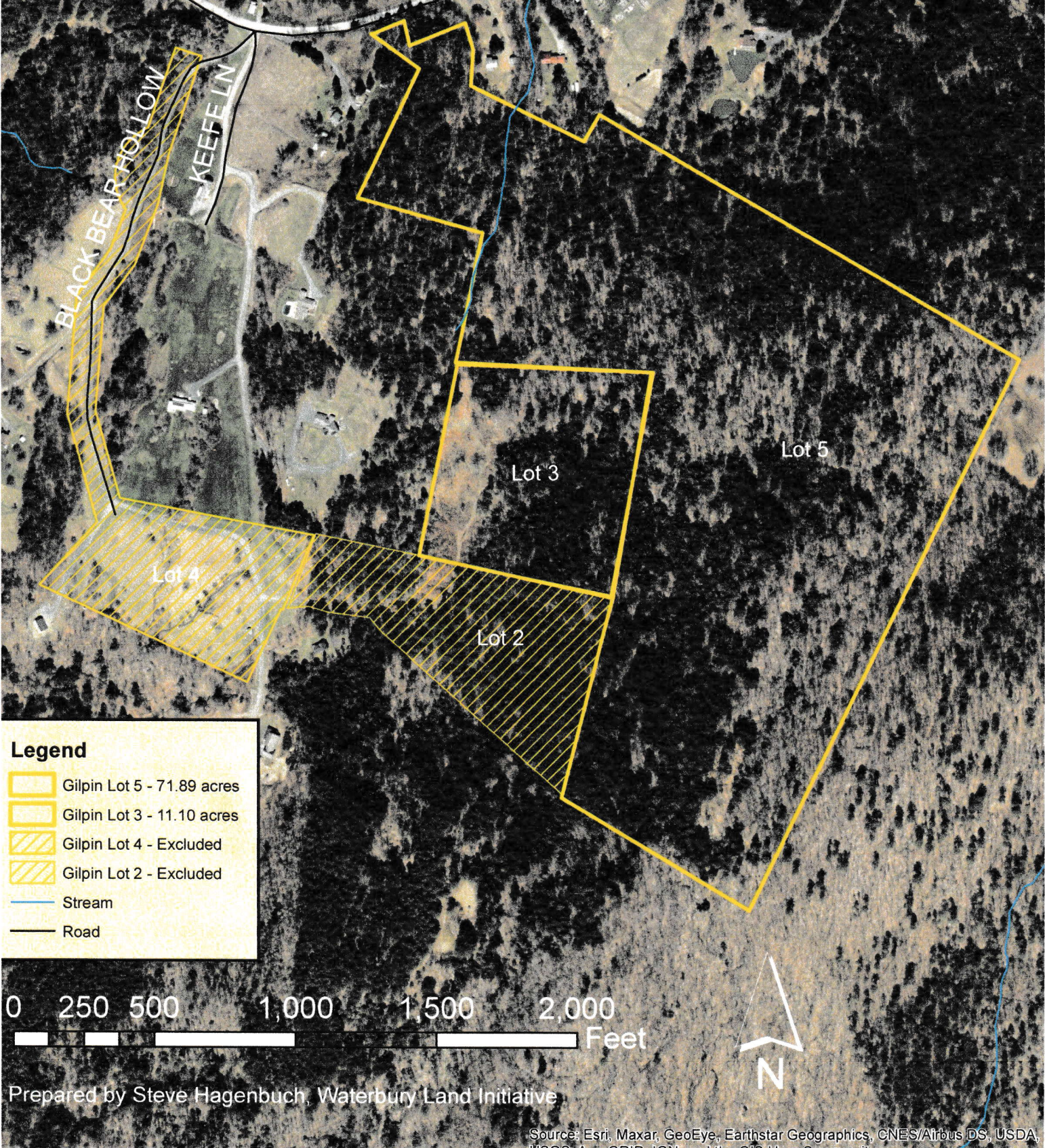
Dear Mr. Nurme,

The Town of Waterbury Conservation Commission reviewed the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation's (FPR) proposed acquisition of the Gilpin properties, including Lot 3, Lot 5, and the right of way over state land, as an addition to C.C. Putnam State Forest at our meeting on May 21, 2024. We sign this letter to offer our support for FPR's acquisition of the Gilpin properties in the Town of Waterbury.

Sincerely,

Print Name and Title:
Waterbury Conservation Commission

Gilpin Conservation Project Waterbury, VT Final Configuration 82.99 Acres





28 North Main St., Suite 1, Waterbury, VT 05676 • 802-249-6529
www.waterburyvt.com/boards/conservation • waterburycvt@gmail.com

Date Sent: June 2, 2024

To: Gannon Osborn, Gunnar Nurme, and Danielle Fitzko, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation; Steve Hagenbuch, Vice-Chair - Waterbury Land Initiative

cc: Town of Waterbury Select Board; Town of Waterbury Planning Commission; Department of Fish & Wildlife - Commissioner, Chris Herrick; Agency of Natural Resources - Secretary, Julie Moore

Re: Proposed Gilpin Family Land Conservation Project

At the Waterbury Conservation Commission's May 21, 2024 meeting we welcomed Steve Hagenbuch from the Waterbury Land Initiative and two representatives from the Vermont Department of Forest, Parks & Recreation (FPR), Gunnar Nurme and Gannon Osborne for an initial review of a proposed conservation project in the Town of Waterbury, located off Black Bear Hollow, for which they have requested the Commission's support.

At the meeting, and in a May 14, 2024 letter attached here as Appendix A, FPR representatives described the proposed project, which involves the acquisition by FPR of two parcels totalling about 83 acres from members of the Gilpin family, in addition to a right-of-way on existing state land. These parcels abut the Perry Hill block of the C.C. Putnam State Forest and would be managed as part of that existing block.

The Perry Hill block and surrounding area are within the lower extent of the Worcester Range, which provides an irreplaceable linkage with a regional wildlife corridor and provides a valuable unfragmented forest block within that corridor. As noted in FPR's May 14 letter, the Worcester Range and the land involved in this proposal rank highly among numerous priority metrics for habitat, connectivity, and natural diversity. As such, the Commission has a keen interest in this area and deeply supports conservation work that advances these values.

As explained to the Commission, FPR's proposed process for acquisitions such as these is to perform a full assessment of the ecological functionality, determine the management class, and begin the long-range management planning process *after* the land is acquired. The introductory letter describes several *potential* management goals for these parcels. These include expanding recreational access for dispersed recreation and as part of the nearby mountain bike trail network at Perry Hill, and also managing the parcel as part of the forest block for wildlife

connectivity. As detailed planning has not begun, the proposal lacks any resource assessment or planning details or objectives that the Commission can evaluate.

As with all successful projects one of the most critical outputs of the initiation phase is a comprehensive proposal.¹²³⁴ Both the introductory letter and our collective discussions on May 21st and May 29th⁵ confirmed a comprehensive proposal is not attainable at this time.

The Commission – through the lens and context of Core Principles of Conservation, e.g. Conserving Vermont’s Natural Heritage, environmental conservation, and Act 59(H.126) – is acting in its role as a public interest representative of Waterbury and broadly as state citizens. We recognize that the proposed project may advance those values or act as a buffer to the core forest block of the Worcester Range, or it may bring other community benefits and impacts, some of which are beyond the purview of this Commission (i.e. economic value), however, in the absence of defined management classifications, goals, or project details, we have no foundational content to make a decision, and are unable to offer our unconditional support for the proposal at this time.

The Commission appreciates the efforts that have gone into this proposal and strongly supports continued work to conserve the Worcester Range and surrounding areas – should that ultimately be advanced by this proposal. We further appreciate the time of the FPR representatives. While we are unable to provide input on the proposal as formulated within the brief timeline requested, we would welcome further discussion of this effort, including as it pertains to the proposed project, once a concrete vision for the work and an analysis of the properties ecological functionality, landscape features, species conservation, historical and cultural importance, natural community and habitat features is available.

Sincerely,

Waterbury Conservation Commission
Amy Marshall-Carney - Chair

¹Project Management Institute - Project Management Body of Knowledge- Initiation Phase Article: The first step can be the most important

² Conserving Vermont’s Natural Heritage - A Guide to Community-Based Planning for the Conservation of Vermont’s Fish, Wildlife and Biological Diversity

³ No.59. An act relating to community resilience and biodiversity protection

⁴ A Landowner’s Guide - Wildlife Habitat Management for Lands in Vermont

⁵ The Commission held a special meeting to discuss the proposal in more detail on May 29th.