

Dear Bolton Select Board,

The Bolton Conservation Commission (BCC) recommends approval of the Friends of Wheeler Field (FOWF) August 19, 2021 application to the Bolton Conservation Fund (BCF) for the amount of \$15,000 toward the purchase of parcel 07-055.000 (Wheeler Field Lot 8) on the corner of Nashville and Stage Rds.

The application and supporting documents, presented to the BCC in detailed discussions with FOWF, were reviewed by the BCC and found to be well aligned with the purpose of the BCF. Specifically, “to provide outdoor recreational [...] opportunities, and to conserve important natural, historic [...] resources identified in the Bolton Town Plan.” Further aligned with BCF purpose, conservation of Wheeler Field would facilitate the development of a public park in an open space that has traditionally been used for community-based activities and recreation.

Wheeler Field is identified in the 2017 Bolton Town Plan as a resource for family recreation, specifically for its ball field, and was noted to have an unclear future. Due to concerns on the part of the Brown Family, public access has been not allowed in recent years and the area has gone unmown. FOWF and the Brown family are now giving the Town of Bolton an opportunity to help preserve this important community space and return it to active use for current and future generations. The BCC is in support of the Town having a playing field, gazebo or park that is not within the floodplain and that could become a community gathering place. The BCC notes that West Bolton, and the rest of Bolton, is likely to become more populous in future decades and preserving open, central public space will foster stronger community relations and help build a more resilient community as we face increasing population and climate related challenges.

The BCC would like to share additional recommendations:

The Bolton Select Board shall accept the transfer of ownership to the Town of Bolton as described in the application, conditional on continued management provided by FOWF as outlined in the application and to be further detailed prior to transfer.

A plan for use and management shall be developed that is aligned with the goals stated in the Bolton Town Plan and in public hearings, with a focus on maintaining traditional recreational use.

The management plan shall include actionable items to ensure that the space is used by all residents of Bolton, not just residents who live in West Bolton.

Respectfully submitted for the Bolton Conservation Commission,

Tucker Andrews; Amy Ludwin; Virginia Haviland