Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards

Acton Board of Selectmen

Morrison Farm Master Plan

Background:

The Morrison Farm property on Concord Road was listed as the highest priority for Town acquisition in both the Town's Master Plan and the Open Space and Recreation Plan. In late 1996, the property became available for purchase by the Town through its 61A "first right of refusal" option. At the 1997 Annual Town Meeting (and capital override ballot vote), Acton voters appropriated $1.3 million to purchase the 32.56 acre Morrison Farm. In addition to purchasing the property, Town Meeting also zoned the Morrison Farm land parcel for "General Municipal", which could include a variety of municipal uses.

A planning effort preceded the 1997 Annual Town Meeting to determine what types of uses could be feasible on the Morrison property. A conceptual use plan was prepared and showed that the property could support at least 2 playing fields in the upper meadow area immediately behind the barn, and that it could support necessary parking on the site. During Town Meeting, proponents for the purchase of the Morrison property noted that due to the unique features of the parcel, the property could support a variety of uses, especially recreational activities. In addition, the East Acton Village Plan (January, 2004) urged that playgrounds be considered as an additional use for the property.

Although the property was purchased in 1997, Mrs. Morrison retained the right, through a life estate, to continue to live in the farmhouse. In 2003, Mrs. Morrison vacated the farmhouse and it then came under the control of the Board of Selectmen. Since that time, citizens have begun to use the property for walking, hiking, horse riding, bird watching and plant and wildlife observation. A number of citizens have come forward advocating for the construction of badly needed playing fields, while other citizens have advocated for complete preservation of the property.

Rather than initiate a process to appropriate funds to develop some of the property, the Board of Selectmen has decided to appoint an advisory committee of representatives of various constituencies interested in the future uses and/or preservation of the Morrison Farm property.

Morrison Farm Master Plan
Page 2.

This advisory committee will have the principal mission to develop a Master Plan for Morrison Farm according to the intent of the purchase of the property at the 1997 Annual Town Meeting and according to the following goals set forth by the Board of Selectmen:

Selectmen Goals for Morrison Farm:

1. Provide for active recreation/play space (1 or 2 soccer/play fields, preferably in the upper field area behind the barn).

2. Maintain the existing system of walking trails and construct a trail connection to the future Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and to East Acton Village.

3. Preserve the lower meadows, areas bordering Ice House Pond, woodland areas and other environmentally sensitive areas on the Morrison property.

4. Preserve the characteristics of the Morrison Farm and the views looking at the property from Concord Road.

5. Provide space for equestrian activities such as trail riding.

6. Provide for Community Garden space.

7. Provide space for a playground.

8. Determine the future use of the farmhouse, barn and any other out buildings.

9. Prioritize any development plans and include cost estimates and general construction timelines.

The Board of Selectmen has been granted CPA funds for the purposes of engaging a Land Use consultant to assist the Morrison Farm Master Plan advisory committee, Town Staff and the Board of Selectmen to develop the Morrison Farm Master Plan.

The specific mission of the Morrison Farm Master Planning Committee is to:

1. Prepare an RFP and select a Land Use Consultant to assist in the preparation of a Master Plan.

2. Review all available information and data available about the Morrison parcel and update the information as appropriate for reference during the development of the Master Plan.

Morrison Farm Master Plan
Page 3.

3. Prepare a comprehensive Morrison Farm Master Plan that is:

    a. Consistent with the vote of the 1997 Annual Town Meeting;
    b. Achieves the goals of the Acton Board of Selectmen, to the extent feasible;
    c. Leverages the unique features of the property for the benefit of future generations.

The Morrison Farm Master Planning Committee will consist of 10 representatives of the following Boards, Commissions, and citizen interest groups:

2 Selectmen (co-chairs of the committee)
1 Recreation Commission member
1 Youth/Adult Recreation league(s) representative
1 Cemetery Commission member
1 Conservation Commission member
1 Acton Conservation Trust member
1 East Acton Village Committee member
1 Abutter
1 At-large representative

The Committee will meet on a regular basis and meetings will be open to the public. As such, any interested citizen may attend committee meetings. The Committee will keep minutes of the meetings and once approved by the committee, these minutes will be forwarded to the Town Clerk for filing and public inspection. The Committee will have primary staff support from Tom Tidman, Director of Natural Resources for the Town of Acton. Additional staff support will be provided, if necessary, under the direction of the Town Manager.

As with previous planning efforts, it is anticipated that the Committee will seek out broad citizen input and recommendations through public forums, site tours and newspaper articles. Additionally, the committee co-chairs will update Board members (and the public) about the committee's progress, at Selectmen meetings.

It is anticipated that the Master Plan can be completed within ten (10) to twelve (12) months and upon its completion, the plan will be submitted to the Acton Board of Selectmen for adoption.

It is emphasized that implementation of any of the recommendations of the Morrison Farm Master Plan must be prioritized with other municipal needs, priorities and available financial resources.

Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

THE MORRISON FARM; A SHORT HISTORY

"The Rock" -- one of Betty Morrison's school horses G Hopkins - 1964

Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

THE MORRISON FARM; A SHORT HISTORY

The story of the Morrison land, its English history anyway, is actually the story of a larger piece of land surrounding that which was to become Morrison.

In 1635, this larger property, which would total 260 acres, was part of the Incorporation of Concord.

In 1642, Concord's Captain Thomas Wheeler and several companions petitioned the Bay Colony General Court for a new grant which would include 200 acres of upland and 60 acres of meadow just west of Nashoba Brook. This land was to be used for pasturing 80 to 120 head of dry cows under a contract of protection by the Captain. It took decades, but finally, the Wheeler Lease was approved, and Wheeler was herdsman, as sworn, for the next 6 years. He built himself one of the first dwelling houses in the area just south of Concord Road. (A state historical marker places the site on Alcott Street across and in from Woodlawn Cemetery.)

Captain Wheeler also built a dam and grist mill on Nashoba Brook [where the current Dam House stands at 127 Concord Road].

This mill was to see a series of owners and uses, but at some point, it was converted to an iron works where nails, hinges and latches were forged for local use. Its final refitting was as either a grist mill or sawmill, which was operated by Daniel Wetherbee from the 1840s.

In 1666 - a new Massachusetts grant renamed the Wheeler Lease 'Concord Village'.

In 1675, at the start of the Indian Wars, Captain Wheeler was caught in a Nipmuck ambush at Brookfield and gravely wounded; he died of his injuries the following year.

1700s:

The town of Acton was incorporated in 1735

Much of the Wheeler Lease (the Morrison land within) was taken over by Nathan Robbins upon Captain Wheeler's demise. In 1736, Robbins sold a parcel off to the town for the new east burying ground (established a year later as East Cemetery; now Woodlawn).

(Thirty-three years later, Robbins' son, Joseph, sold more land off for cemetery use -- and in 1812, Joseph Robbins' son, John sold a third section for the same purpose.)

In the mid-1700s, meadow lots were divided off and farming became the primary activity in the area.

[Cannot find the date], Nathan Robbins' son, Joseph, built a two-story dwelling house-with-ell over the cellarhole that lies just north of the Morrison house; some of the structural timbers used came from the earlier Thomas Wheeler dwelling.

Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

An early bridge, the millpond, and a much smaller icehouse are noteworthy in this *c.* 1880 image. The bridge was later replaced with granite, and, more recently, a new bridge has been installed.

The train depot in East Acton was probably built *c.* 1872 when the railroad went through.

What is now the Morrison hayfield is seen beyond the Pond to the right of the depot

Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

Daniel Wetherbee's Saw Mill stood on the dam at 119 Concord Road. An early mill owned by John Robbins was on this site, and this may be the actual mill. Nelson Tenney replaced the mill with a hydroelectric generating plant *c*. 1907.

On one side of Concord Road at Great Road was a saw mill active from 1788 to 1890. On the other side, ice was cut from the 1870's to the 1950's. (AHS.)

Before the ice was cut, these 19th century Actonians had a skating party. (Glass negative, AHS.)

The Morrison land lies behind the skaters and to the left of the ice cutters.

"...that rude bridge"

Joseph Robbins had earned promotion to captain in the Acton Militia -- and in the predawn hours of April 19, 1775, he was brought the town's first alarm. Dr. Samuel Prescott galloped up, pounded on the house and bellowed "The Regulars are coming! The Regulars are coming!" Roused, Robbins fired three shots into the air as quickly as he could reload, signaling surrounding militia to report immediately for duty. Robbins' 13 year-old son, John, saddled his father's mare and raced off to spread word to Captain Isaac Davis and Deacon Simon Hunt, who led their companies that morning to Concord and their places in history.

In 1830, the Joseph Robbins barn was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. The house stood empty for many years until finally, it, too, was set ablaze. The remaining cellarhole is honored by a large, inscribed boulder.

By the mid-1850s, farming had become vital to Acton. The town's impressive array of agricultural products included Indian corn, oats, rye, barley, millet, wheat, hops, hay, potatoes, beans, field vegetables, apples and even cranberries. After the Civil War, new peach orchards were laid out, and peaches, apples, cidar and vinegar became important sources of income.

Ice House Pond and the Morrison place

In 1886, Theophilus Mason founded the Mason Ice Company and winter-harvested the Nashoba Brook millpond for the next 35 years; he may have given the pond its name.

In 1921, John Forbes and William Grace purchased Mason's business, ice house and pond, renaming the firm the Concord Ice Company. They cut, stored and sold ice for another 26 years.

In 1932, John Forbe's brother, Edward L. and his wife Anna moved into what is now the Morrison house. It's likely that brother John split the property off from the pond acreage for the couple's personal use. Edward worked for his brother in the nearby ice house; he had the critical task of 'placing' or stacking the 350-to-400 pound ice bars for storage with insulating layers of hay between.

In 1947, Everett Dillman bought the company in turn (keeping its name) with pond and ice house, and he operated the firm until 1979. His timing could not have been worse. In 1945, two years before his new venture, U.S. manufacturers turned from their previous war-footing to manufacturing consumer items, and new refrigerators steadily replaced ice boxes.

Dillman finally gave up and in 1980, sold the 7-acre pond and 1.5 acres of land to the town.

Remarkably, the Concord Ice Company still operates at 255 Walden Street, Concord.

In 1954, the Edward L. Forbes house, barn and land was bought by John Morrison of Morrison Orchards in Littleton; he purchased the property for his former wife, Elizabeth. She, Betty, ran a small riding stable on the site for the next 35 years, teaching horsemanship and a love of animals to generations of local children.

Recreation at Morrison Farm

Background

Current Situation

Conclusion / Recommendations

Acton Recreation Commission presentation to the
Morrison Farm Master Planning Committee 05/03/05

Background

- 1997 Morrison acquisition focused on recreation
  - Defined as General Municipal Property
  - Open areas as ball fields
  - Trails in forested Areas
- Acton 2000 population: 20,331 (Federal Census)
- Open Space & Recreation Plan: 2002-2007
- 2002: 63 acres of active recreation fields (3.1 acres/1,000 residents)
- National Recreation and Park Association recommends 10.5 acres/1,000 residents

Acton Recreation Commission presentation to the Morrison Farm Master Planning Committee 05/03/05

Current Situation

- Large users (youth soccer, baseball, football) all have registration limits due to lack of fields
- Smaller users (softball, lacrosse) growing at 10%+/year
- No ability to "rest" fields

- By end of 2005: 81 acres of active rec available
  - 20 acres coming online soon
    - School Street (14 acres)
    - Leary Field (6 acre-equivalent)
  - Losing 2 acres (Concord Road / cemetery land)
- 2005 Population: 19,865 (Town of Acton)
- 4.1 acres/1,000 residents

Acton Recreation Commission presentation to the Morrison Farm Master Planning Committee 05/03/05

Conclusion / Recommendations

- Original acquisition of Morrison targeted its use for active and passive recreation
- Still a large unmet need for recreation space
  - We cannot meet current interest
  - We cannot preserve our fields by "resting" them
  - Interest is still growing
- Set aside the upper plateau area of Morrison for active recreation
- Defer decisions on how to configure it
- Plan for adequate parking now to accommodate usage of that area

Acton Recreation Commission presentation to the Morrison Farm Master Planning Committee 05/03/05

Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

Organization/League	Person Completing Survey	Are they a league for adults or children	Brief Description	How Many Participants do you have in your league	How many seasons does your organization use the Town facilities	Do you have enough field space	How many times are you not able to obtain a field permit for time requested due to lack of field space	How many registrations have you had to turn away due to lack of field availability which acquires more field space	Do you know the amount of participants you had in 1997	Do you know the amount of participants you had in 1999	Do you know the amount of participants you had in 2001	Do you know the amount of participants you had in 2002	Do you know the amount of participants you had in 2003	Do you know the amount of participants you had in 2004	Do you know the amount of participants you had in 2005	What do you predict for the upcoming registrations--a growth or decline? Do you have an expected number?
Acton- Boxboro Youth Baseball (ABYB)	Randy Steines. ABYB Field Coordinator	children	ABYB provides the opportunity for children ages 5-15 to play organized baseball during Spring, Summer and Fall baseball seasons	we max out at approximately 1120 players during our top Spring participation season and have over 2000 participants in the combined Spring, Summer and Fall seasons	3 Seasons (Spring, Summer, and Fall)	we are short of field space, especially at the Babe Ruth age level (13-15) and had a record 16 teams in the age 11-12 (Majors) group this year, so the demand for Babe Ruth fields will only be increasing in the near future	We get permitted by Acton Rec fields, but we do have to share the high school fields and cannot get all the time we actually need for the teams that use those fields.	to this point, none that we are aware of			1284	1663	1803	1979	1990	we are expecting about 5% annual growth
Acton Adult Softball League (AASL)	Rich Gottesman, AASL Commissioner, rich.gottesman@verizon.net http://www.actonasl.com	Adults, 21+ years old (no exceptions)	AASL runs an adult softball league in a social yet semi-competitive environment catering to people working or living in Acton or	310 adults are registered for the 2006 season	Spring and Summer evenings (Late April to Mid-August)	While we are able to receive field permits from the Town for league use, having access to only 2 softball diamonds (Elm, NARA) makes us limit the number of teams and players we accept. We need more space, whether through additional fields in Acton or elsewhere, additional evenings	Since AASL is sponsored by the Acton Recreation Department, we obtain a known schedule of permits for our season. AASL participates in the field use meeting in March and plans our season and acceptable number of teams based on the permits received. We would like to	This count is not known. We've grown from 8 teams in 2000 to 16 teams in 2006; from roughly 150 players to over 300. Based on our knowledge of field space and our pre-season planning around this, we determine the allowable number of teams. This year we turned away 4 complete	None (league started in 2000)		209 adults		274 adults		300 adults	This count is not known. We've grown from 8 teams in 2000 to 16 teams in 2006; from roughly 150 players to over 300. Based on our knowledge of field space and our pre-season planning around this, we determine the allowable
Acton-Boxborough Youth Soccer (ABYS)	Dave Scheuer, Executive Director	ABYS, itself, is a youth soccer league (Kindergarten-High School). We also actively provide soccer training, scheduled play, and education for all adults who coach and assist in the league. In addition, we work with a number of locally-oriented outside groups, both youth and adult, to schedule additional team and training opportunities for A-B youth and adult players.	See league age question.	1800-2000 youth	All --- as noted: regular league play at 3 competitive levels/leagues in Fall (mid-August through late-November) and Spring (late-March through end-June), training sessions all Summer (late-June through late-August), as much training as possible during Winter (late-November through late-March)	There is currently "sufficient" field space to fit in the requested needs of ABYS (and the external groups that we work with); however, there is not currently enough space available which is of adequate quality to support the needs on a consistent basis. This is generally attributable to the need to rest and regenerate active soccer fields on a regular basis (every 3rd season, optimally) , which implies that the total needed is approximately 30% more than simply fitting in all the practice and game slots. Current examples of issues: - School St (original area) has not had rest/maintenance for at least 7 years ; - Concord Rd is offline for at least summer repairing center of field; - 1/3 of Nara Park is offline for at least summer repairing the front field	Not applicable	None - we don't close registrations until after a season has started	Following are the actual registration numbers for each league season. Total participants is roughly 120% of the higher value (i.e., approximately 80% play BOTH seasons and overlap in the counts)	: S99 – 1,563 F99 - 1,715	S01 – 1,382 F01 - 1,488		S03 – 1,387 F03 – 1,527		S05 - 1,372 F05 – 1,530	Directly proportional to total Acton-Boxborough population changes. Estimate a continued growth trend
AB Youth Softball	Tom Reuther/ABYSB President	Youths	Girls youth softball league	Aprox. 200 participants per season	Three	We have sufficient space at this time; Though we have sufficient field space for normal league use, we do not have the facilities necessary to run our own tournament, which generally requires three softball fields of sufficient size collocated or very close together.	Rare - some minor conflicts with Acton Adult Softball league	None	Pretty consistently around 200 per season in the Spring and Fall and 50 in the summer.	Pretty consistently around 200 per season in the Spring and Fall and 50 in the summer.	Pretty consistently around 200 per season in the Spring and Fall and 50 in the summer.	Pretty consistently around 200 per season in the Spring and Fall and 50 in the summer.	Pretty consistently around 200 per season in the Spring and Fall and 50 in the summer.	Pretty consistently around 200 per season in the Spring and Fall and 50 in the summer.	Pretty consistently around 200 per season in the Spring and Fall and 50 in the summer.	Expect no change.

Organization/League	Person Completing Survey	Are they a league for adults or children	Brief Description	How Many Participants do you have in your league	How many seasons does your organization use the Town facilities	Do you have enough field space	How many times are you not able to obtain a field permit for time requested due to lack of field space	How many registrations have you had to turn away due to lack of field availability which acquires more field space	Do you know the amount of participants you had in 1997	Do you know the amount of participants you had in 1999	Do you know the amount of participants you had in 2001	Do you know the amount of participants you had in 2002	Do you know the amount of participants you had in 2003	Do you know the amount of participants you had in 2004	Do you know the amount of participants you had in 2005	What do you predict for the upcoming registrations--a growth or decline? Do you have an expected number?
Acton Boxboro Girls Youth Lacrosse	Ingrid Joyce, President	Children	ABGYL teaches the games of lacrosse to girls grades 3-8.	Apx. 150 girls	One - Spring	We are currently AT capacity. and most likely can not add another team without additional field space. We practice after the high school teams end their practices and can not use the fields until they are off of them. Also, If they need the high school field for a game, we can not use it. This is all completely understandable, but an additional field would certainly be wonderful.	Generally we are able to obtain the fields we have asked for (thank you!). However we do not ask for very much. If our program were to grow we would need more field space.	We have capped our program at 7 teams this year. We expanded some teams to reduce our waiting list creating very large teams, which made some people unhappy. We had a waiting list of apx 5 girls. Next year we anticipate reducing the sizes of our teams - we expect the waiting list to grow.					apx 100		apx. 120	We expect an increase in our numbers as lacrosse has been gaining in popularity. However, we anticipate reducing the sizes of our teams, there for adding an additional team or two. I am GUESSING we would increase our use of field space in order to accommodate the girls who would like to play, our hope is that every girl who wants to play, gets to play.
Pop Warner Football and Cheering	Jim Maxwell/Gerry McGavick	children	5 Levels/Age and weight groups play football against Merrimac Valley teams (6-14 years-old)	Boys-approx. 200 Girls--approx. 125	One season--fall	With expansion of Elm Street and Leary Field our space is adequate. In addition, we utilize the Jr. High field and High School gyms for cheering. Lighted venues are critical to program growth!	This happens infrequently, as we have almost complete access to Elm Street. Cheering has difficulty with lighted fields and indoor practice access due to conflicts with indoor sports.	We turn away 25-50 kids per year, depending on registration		180	180		200		225	Numbers will remain similar to current totals.
Acton Pick-up soccer	Andrew Valente	Adults	Informal pickup soccer games held at lunchtime for men and women working or living in the area. Quality of play is generally moderate to advanced. No dangerous play (such as slide tackles) are permitted. Self-officiated and friendly (no score is kept, no results maintained).	Generally around 40 total, rarely more than about 20 on a given day.	2 permits obtained (spring/early summer, later summer/fall)	Yes	Never	None					40		40	We have been in other towns before this and while the membership changes, the numbers have always been relatively similar.
Acton Boxboro Boys Youth Lacrosse	Mark Robertson	children	Youth lacrosse program for boys in Acton and Boxboro grades 3-8	185	Spring and in summer one field once per week	Would like additional	Would like more time on Leary	None	not sure	70	145		165		185	Growth approx. 200

Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

Acton Cemetery Commissioners' Report to the Morrison Farm Master Planning Committee

Woodlawn Cemetery was established in 1738 and now comprises 70.5 acres (see map #1). A recreation field was created on cemetery property in 1988 (also shown, with parking area, on map #1). From our best estimate of future burials, the cemetery will not need to use the field for burials for a minimum of 7 years.

In March 1951, additional land was purchased and approved for burial purposes except for a 4.48 acre parcel "C" abutting the now Morrison Farm (land of "Edward L. Forbes" on the plan), shown of map #2. The well for the house was located on this parcel and for that reason, burials were not approved at that time (subsequent records are not available to show any change in that regard). However, the house at 116 Concord Road is now on Town water and probably has been since mains were installed in the 1960's.

The Commissioners regard the 4.48 acre parcel as likely to be approved for burial purposes in accordance with the master plan (map #1).

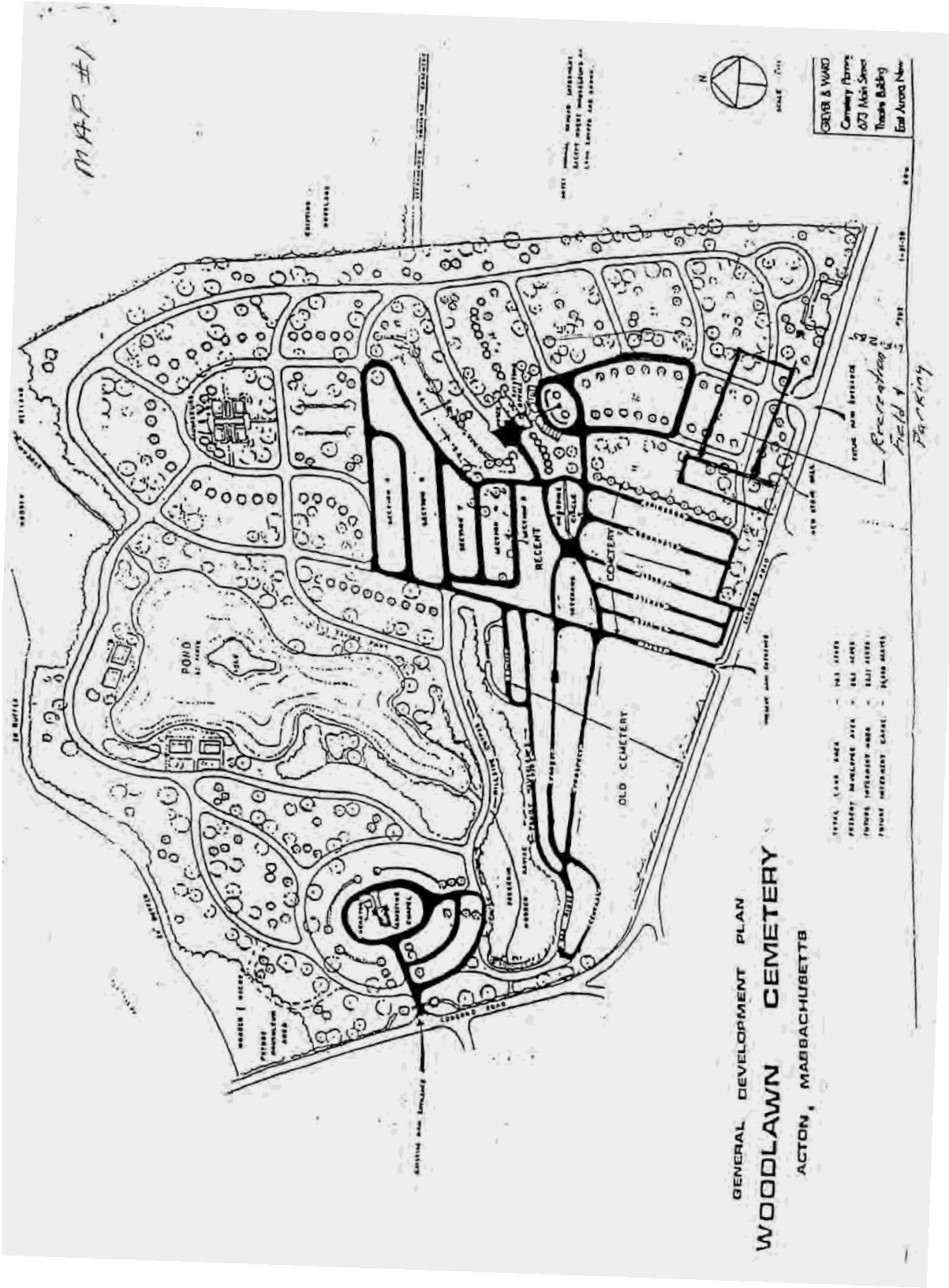
The Cemetery Commissioners are concerned that the students from the Conway School of Design, who drew up an early study of the Morrison property chose, for reasons unknown, to suggest part of parcel "C" and its immediate environs to be made into a parking lot, something the Commissioners strongly oppose for aesthetic reasons and for its proximity to the historic Robbins Alarm Stone and cellar hole shown as Lot "B" (for which we are also responsible) on Map #2.

The Commissioners have an interest in the ongoing use of the Morrison barn, especially since it has not been possible to create a much needed storage facility with the funds voted in an article passed at Town Meeting.

In sum, the Commissioners share the interest and concern of any abutter.

Brewster Conant
Cemetery Commissioner
March 4, 2005

Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued



Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATION

Acton Board of Health - Telephone 978-264-9634 - Fax 978-264-9630

August 13, 2003

TO: John Murray, Assistant Town Manager

FROM: Doug Halley, Health Director

SUBJECT: Woodlawn Cemetery

A question has been raised regarding the status of Cemetery land adjacent to the Morrison property on Concord Road. Health Department records indicate that this land was approved to be purchased by Annual Town Meeting, March 12, 1951 (Article 41) (see attached). The vote authorized the Cemetery Commissioners to purchase for burial purposes two parcels of land of approximately 42 Acres, with Parcel 1 being the land in question.

Health Department records further indicate that Acton Board of Health authorized the Cemetery Commissioners to use the land for burial purposes pursuant to MGL Chapter 114, Section 34 on September 25, 1956 (confirmed at Special Town Meeting, October 1, 1956 (Article 22)). Excepted from this assignment was a roughly triangular piece of land abutting the Morrison Farm known as Parcel C. It is the Health Department's understanding that the reason for this exception was to protect the well being used at that time by the people than owning the Morrison property. The Engineering Department indicates that in the 1960's town water was extended down Concord Road and the Morrison House was connected to it. However, we have been unable to locate any documents that indicate that Parcel C was later assigned by the Board of Health for burial purposes.

The requirements for the Assignment of Cemeteries by the Board of Health are as follows:

> New or Expanded Cemeteries
>
> No land other than that already used or appropriated can be used, for burial unless by permission of the town (town meeting) or of the mayor and alderman of the city in which the land is located (M.G.L. c. 114 s. 34). No approval is to be given until the use is approved in writing by the board of health where the town is located, after giving public notice and holding a hearing.
>
> The board of health must include in its records a description of such lands sufficient for their identification.

No land is to be used for burial if it is so situated that surface water or ground drainage from the site can enter into any stream, pond, reservoir, well, filter gallery or other water used as a source of public water supply or any tributary of a source that is so used, or any aqueduct or other works used in connection with public water supplies, until a plan or description of the lands proposed for such use have been submitted to and approved in writing by DEP. (M.G.L. c. 114, s. 35).

Any person aggrieved by the action of a board of health in approving the purchase, taking or use of any lands for cemetery purposes may, within 60 days, appeal from the order of the board to DEP. DEP, after a hearing, may rescind the order or may modify and amend the order by approving a part of the lands proposed for use as a cemetery. (M.G.L. c. 114, s. 36).

Unfortunately the Assignment of Parcel C for burial purposes by the Board of Health can not be confirmed nor denied. The Health Department has minutes for the Board of Health dating back to 1974 but no later than that. The Town Clerk's Office indicates that they have no historical minutes for the Board of Health. We have asked the Cemetery Department to provide the documentation that they have and their documents mirror the documents on file within the Health Department. Barring the possibility of another department having the documentation the Board of Health must assume that burials can not be allowed on Parcel C until the process that was detailed above was completed.

Cc: David Abbt
Ed Ellis

Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

ACTON CEMETERY COMMISSIONERS' REPORT TO THE MORRISON FARM MASTER
PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Cemetery Commissioners at a meeting March 8, 2006 voted the following:

"Among the proposals for the Morrison Land is the establishment of a parking area along the wall of Section 14 connected to the present ballfield lot. Also proposed was some play area near the Robbins cellar hole on Cemetery land.

While we would necessarily withhold judgment until plans are set forth, we would prefer that those uses be accommodated on the 33 acre Morrison property, use of which the Morrison Committee is charged."

Brewster Conant
Cemetery Commissioner
March 26, 2006

Request to Consider the Addition of a Disc Golf Course to the Acton Park System

The game of disc golf has grown explosively in recent years, and is now being enjoyed by people of all ages on over 1,500 courses worldwide with 1,200 in the US alone. It is my belief that the game has grown to the point where the Acton Park System and the community it serves can greatly benefit from the addition of a disc golf facility.

I respectfully propose that the members of the Acton Recreation Commission consider the addition of a disk golf course to a suitable town park.

This letter describes the game briefly and outlines a proposed course of action in determining suitability and feasibility for the Acton Park System. After reading the 'Brief Description of the Game', please review the four elements of my proposed course of action (1. Community Interest and Involvement, 2. Site Selection and Evaluation, 3. Financial Cost Estimate and Funding, and 4. Long Term Care and Maintenance Plan). After reviewing this material, please let me know if you feel I have missed an aspect which would ensure the most balanced outcome of a disc golf course proposal.

I look forward to discussing this proposal with the Recreation Commission. I also look forward to leading the community involvement in potential course development and operation.

Sincerely,

Craig L. Holbrook

A Brief Description of the Game

The concept of the game is easier to understand when the term 'Frisbee® golf' is used. However, Frisbee is a registered trademark and the game has been formally named 'disc golf' instead.

The game is similar to traditional ball golf. Players use special frisbees (golf discs) instead of balls and clubs, and throw them at an above-ground target instead of a hole in the ground. There are different types of golf discs used for different purposes, much like ball golfers use different clubs (putters, drivers, etc).

The object of the game is to throw a golf disc into the target for 'par' or better, i.e., in the fewest number of throws. The target is typically a steel basket over which chains hang, known as a Pole Hole®. The player begins by 'driving' from a designated concrete or mulched tee area and continues toward the target, throwing each consecutive shot from the spot where the previous throw has landed. Finally, a successful 'putt' sends the disc into the target, and the hole is completed. The combination of challenges to players, including distance, accuracy, wind, trees, shrubbery, water and terrain changes, offer plenty of action and excitement during the course of a game.

A complete, tournament-ready course of 18 holes typically utilizes 18 to 27 acres of land, depending on terrain and course design. Hole lengths typically run anywhere from 150 to 500

feet. Courses, either 9 or 18 hole, commonly co-exist with other recreational facilities, such as trail systems, activity fields, and open parkland. Disc golf is enjoyed all year long, and in many types of weather conditions, including snow.

Nationally, the growth of disc golf is exploding. The game's governing body, the Professional Disc Golf Association (PDGA), reports an annual 12% growth rate, a total of 7 to 10 million persons who have tried the game with approximately 500,000 regular players. The PDGA is on the Web at http://www.pdga.com.

"Who Might Play" and How the Game May Benefit the Acton Community.

You'll find men, women, and children of virtually all ages playing on disc golf courses. Over 50% of PDGA members are 31 – 40 years of age, possess a college degree, and earn over $40,000 per year. Additionally, disc golfers tend to be environmentally conscious and are often seen picking up litter from the parkland and reporting vandalism and miscreant behavior.

Players are drawn by many of the same pleasures found in traditional ball golf: fresh air in a beautiful landscape, the camaraderie of friends, and the challenge and excitement of combining personal skill and speed to project an object toward a target. In addition to recreation that the players benefit from, the town and community can benefit also. Table 1. delineates benefits that communities commonly realize from the addition of a disc golf course.

The cited community benefits are realized because the game itself is easy to pick up. The rules are simple to grasp, allowing beginners to immediately have fun challenging themselves and their friends. A typical round of 18 holes takes approximately 60 to 90 minutes to play.

Perhaps the greatest factor behind disc golf's broad accessibility is its low cost. Players need nothing more than an $8-$10 frisbee, and since most courses are located in parks, there are little or no admission fees. This factor alone opens the game up to countless Massachusetts residents who cannot afford many of today's other popular recreation activities.

Bottom line: disc golf is fun for everyone regardless of age, gender or economic status.

Table 1. Community Benefits of Disc Golf

Economic
- Low cost of construction maintenance, and play
- Attracts players to the local community

Community Health
- Provides a low impact and safe means of exercise for all age groups and genders
- Mental strategy is involved in negotiating obstacles
- Reduction of mental fatigue

Environmental
- Aesthetic enhancement of park
- Low resource impacts

Safety
- Crime deterrent as the park is utilized by more people

Education
- Schools may introduce the course into their curricula for physics, physical fitness, ecology, planning, and others.

Community Involvement
- Formal and informal games and tournaments bring community members together
- Families and friends can share time together

Four Point Course of Action:

There appear to be four critical elements to moving the idea of a disc golf course forward in the Acton park system. After reading the following four elements, please let me know if you feel I have missed an aspect which would ensure the most balanced outcome of a disc golf course proposal.

1. Community Interest and Involvement – The first question that we must answer is that of Community Interest. A comprehensive study suggests, "if you build it they will play" (conducted by Jason Sinicalchi, doctoral candidate at West Virginia_University_Link:
http://www.pdga.com/documents/BenefitsOfDiscGolf-Siniscalchi_.pdf).
This study found that the average weekly use of a disc golf course for towns with population of over 25,000 to be 450 players. In order to guage community interest and support, I suggest a two pronged approach. First I will solicit interest from the community both for players and for persons interested in helping to establish the course. This can be done by using the town newsletter, the local newspaper, Acton Unlimited, and other electronic media. This unscientific survey will aim to gather names, phone numbers, and email addresses for those interested in playing and founding the course.

2. Site Selection and Evaluation – Source material suggests that 18 to 27 acres are required to build an 18-hole course. Upon initial evaluation, it seems that the Morrison Property may be suitable for a course. A disc course located on the Morrison Property would co-exist with other recreation uses which may be approved. It is quite common for courses to be co-located with trail systems, open park lands, picnic and athletic facilities and even agricultural uses. As part of the site selection effort, I have recruited a local member of the Professional Disc Golf Association and local high-school track coach David James to review and walk the park layout, examine use constraints, and recommend a preliminary course layout if we agree that the property is suitable. Additionally, we will work with the recreation department and interested conservation groups to incorporate our disc golf into any master park planning documents.

3. Financial Cost Estimate and Funding – Perhaps the greatest attraction of disc golf is the low cost of the game. The costs to construct and maintain a course are, in many cases, cheaper than the construction of a single public tennis court. This element of the action plan will consist of a detailed cost analysis of the funds required to establish the course. Speaking with the recreation director, it is apparent that discretionary funding for the Recreation Department and the Town of Acton is limited in the coming year. For this reason, and to encourage and showcase the sense of community that a disc golf course can engender, this section will also describe alternate funding sources for the course. Many courses across the country have been funded by a park system or civic group. However, many others have been created with a mix of public funding and sponsorship from local area businesses. A few creative ideas for funding include hole sponsorship by local businesses in exchange for discrete advertising, county or state development funds, and private individual funding from a variety of sources.

4. Long Term Care and Maintenance Plan – Any time a park department adds facilities to their environment, they must consider the long term maintenance commitment. With this in mind, our final report will contain a plan with recommended course maintenance activities. As mentioned previously, a great attraction of disc golf is the low cost of this maintenance. Most, if not all, lawn care, landscaping, and trash removal needs would be part of the normal city plan. Examples of additional activities include seasonal storage of pole-holes, occasional tree-trimming and periodic maintenance of tee boxes and signage.

Conclusions:

Thank you for your time and your service to the Acton Community. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you concerning the possibility of disc golf in Acton. As a disc golf player since university, I feel strongly that a course can be a welcome addition to this community.

I believe that this course of action will take approximately two to four months to complete. The items requiring the most time will include getting the word out to the community, soliciting support, patronage, and volunteerism, and working with the town to create a well coordinated plan.

Sincerely,

Craig L. Holbrook
Hm: (978) 635-0951
Cell: (617) 320- 6961
1 Old Oregon Trail

October 20, 2005

TO: Morrison Farm Master Plan Committee
FR: Maya Spies, citizen & frequent walker of Morrison meadows and woodlands.

RE: Multi-Use Proposal for Morrison Farm Property

OVERVIEW

This Multi-Use Proposal provides a comprehensive framework which can be used to guide the decision-making process, regarding how the ~32 acre Morrison Farm property in east Acton is to be used by the community at large.

This proposal is also a sincere attempt to represent the views of many people in Acton who have grown to love this farm's unique qualities, either because of their historical connection with the place or because they have walked the property during the last eight (almost nine) years since it was purchased by the town, and they now know and appreciate its special characteristics.

I offer this proposal in the interests of ensuring that present and future citizens of Acton may enjoy an outdoor experience close to home that is rare and will become rarer as the years go by.

GOALS

This proposal is designed to achieve a number of broad goals:

- Satisfy the expectations of as many Acton citizens as possible.
- Provide discovery, learning and recreational opportunities to the community.
- Provide links to adjacent lands and neighborhoods.
- Protect wildlife and wildlife corridors.
- Preserve the farm's unique and irreplaceable aspects.
- Keep costs to a minimum in the short and long term.

APPROACH

A helpful way to approach how Morrison farm lands may best be used by the community, is to recognize which factors govern the issue. With any land-planning project, success depends on addressing the full spectrum of site-specific conditions that influence it, such as the following:

A. Who wants to use the space.
B. What do they want to use it for and what are their needs.
C. What is the natural lay of the land and its neighboring environment.
D. Why type of visual effect is desired now and long term.
E. What are potential neighborhood impacts.
F. What is the budget.

Regarding the Morrison property, at this point in time, many answers to these questions are readily at hand.

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SITE-SPECIFIC CONDITIONS

A. Who wants to use the Morrison place?
Here is a possible list:

Automobiles
Bench sitters
Bicyclists
Dog enthusiasts
Energetic youth, supervised and not
Fishermen
Gardeners and farmers-at-heart
Handicapped
History buffs
Horseback riders
Natural history enthusiasts
Picnickers
Small children with parents
Walkers
Wild animals

B. What do they want to use it for, and what are their needs?
Some ideas might include:

Automobiles: ease of parking, sufficient number of parking spaces, pedestrian access from car.

Bench sitters: access to seating in shade, nice views; for parents when watching children.

Bicyclists: may stop to visit or pass through.

Dog enthusiasts: unfenced free running; safe fenced dog park; adequate space for field training.

Energetic youth: wide open space for unorg. play, org. sports, crafts, and learning opportunities.

Fishermen: points of access to waterways.

Gardeners and farmers-at-heart: plots to grow vegs/flowers, well maintained land, rural vistas.

Handicapped: smooth terrain, hand-holds, easy visual guides.

History buffs: access to historical sites and artifacts, learning opportunities.

Horseback riders: will usually pass through, may want trailer parking.

Natural history enthusiasts: self-discovery and learning opportunities.

Picnickers: open terrain with a view, access to picnic tables.

Small children with parents: easy access, safe place to play, enrichment.

Walkers: access to existing trails and other use areas from a variety of points.

Wild animals: freedom of movement, freedom from fear, readily available food and shelter.

C. What is the natural lay of the land and its neighboring environment?

A sketch is attached, showing the property and environs. Because of its relatively simple rectangular shape, and easily defined types of terrain, the Morrison property may be viewed as three parts of a whole, each offering specific attributes. I call these three parts, "The Woods", "The Meadow" and "The Front" (from top-to-bottom on the map).

2

The Woods
"The Woods" includes all the wooded land in the back of the property, bordered (from west to east) by wooded Cemetery land, a Private House Lot (clear cut), and extensive Nashoba Brook Marshlands. The private house lot currently cuts off historic access between Morrison farm and the Isaac Davis Trail network. The Morrison woods is generally flat, easily traversed, with a well-demarcated loop trail around its edge and vestiges of other trails and lumber truck tracks. In the southeastern side of the woods, an earthen berm extends into Nashoba Brook, where a bridge once stood. Classic rural vistas can be enjoyed from the woods, looking into the Meadow.

The Meadow
The part I refer to as "The Meadow" begins where the woods ends, and extends toward the front of the property, to a point where a trail breaks through the stone wall on the wooded Cemetery side (west). On the Meadow side of the stonewall a shallow trench has been dug, presumably to improve drainage off the field. This part of the Meadow is sheltered by a framework of trees and sky with a long grassy view, beautiful and surprisingly private, despite the fact that Rte. 2A can be seen (and sometimes heard) not too far distant in the east. The Meadow rises slightly across its expanse and then quickly dips downward, through wetlands, to the Marsh and Nashoba Brook, whose edge is mostly lined with trees and shrubs, providing habitat for a variety of wildlife. A lower "thumb" of the meadow is enclosed on three sides by waterways, Ice House Pond to the east and two trenches probably intended to facilitate drainage; these drainage streams are grown over by shrubs and small trees. Throughout the Meadow, tall grasses in summer are vestiges of a once healthy hay field, but it is currently under threat of native and non-native plant invasion. A few grassy trails through the Meadow have been delineated by walkers and horseback riders over the years.

Note: An active wildlife corridor exists throughout the Woods, the Meadow, and along all waterways, if observations by an experienced tracker are any indication (please see Wildlife Trails map, attached).

The Front
What I refer to as "The Front" of the property, extends from the line where the Meadow ends, and encompasses a high, broad, grassy plateau reaching all the way to the barn where some areas are fenced in. The Front also includes outbuildings, the barn, garage, and a house on Concord Road, and a large, paddock area by the road, enclosed by a tall wooden fence. The terrain in the paddock is distinguished by very tall pines and deep earthen excavations that make walking unsafe. To the east of the paddock, on the other side of the fence, the land slopes quickly into a small stream or wetlands. Behind the paddock, a high and wide grassy path, enclosed by tall fences, slopes quickly downward into a badly overgrown pasture below, framed-in by waterways and trees. This piece of land abuts the site where the foundation of the old Ice House lies (overgrown by trees), but is largely inaccessible from the historic site because of wet ground.

The Morrison house and barn and garage are in good shape, and are readily accessible to foot traffic via a sidewalk along the north side of Concord Road, which extends from Rte. 2A to Town Hall. Access by car is not so easy because there is currently little room for parking.

Along the sidewalk, several feet west of the Morrison property line, is the sunken foundation of the very old Robbins family house, designated with a historical marker. This foundation may also be viewed from a lovely, grassy field, which lies above the sidewalk (hidden by vegetation) and behind the Morrison garage, between the existing soccer field and the farm. This mowed grass area, partially enclosed by large, handsome shrubs, is owned by the Cemetery but, visually and historically, is an extension of the Morrison farm.

D. Why type of visual effect is desired, now and long term?

At this point in time, everyone who is familiar with the Morrison property would proba that the highest visual priority is to maintain the farm's rural character and beautiful vi: and into the future. But there may be a problem affecting this wish.

Because it is designated as Municipal Property, town leaders are permitted to use the b and land in any way they see fit (within regulatory parameters, of course), now and in t If citizens want to ensure that the rural character and beautiful vistas of the farm are no the vagaries of time and circumstance, they should probably devise some way to conve part of the farm to Conservation Land. Another advantage to this approach is that long maintenance of any conserved part of the property would be by land stewards, a volun not likely to be as affected by the ebbs and flows of municipal budgets. In addition, la affecting conservation lands are (I think) more lenient than laws affecting municipal pr with public access.

E. What are potential neighborhood impacts?

The Morrison farm is located in a quiet residential neighborhood on a well-used town Nearby residents, and drivers who ride by in cars, are likely to prefer that their view of from the road be unchanged as much as possible. If parking for cars is provided on th citizens are likely to agree that it should be designed in a low profile way and not loca disrupt picturesque views. Access to the property by large numbers of cars could caus excessive noise and pollution. Frequent use of the property by large numbers of peopl same time (more than 25 or 50?) might spoil the rural character of the place.

Currently, nearly all access is by foot, either from nearby neighborhoods or from cars small nearby lots. The closest parking lots to Morrison Farm --- at the soccer field an House Pond, are likely to remain available for many years, and maybe the pond lot ca enlarged.

G. What is the budget?

To date, a general shortage of municipal funds has served to protect the Morrison pro intensive development. The foreseeable budget dedicated for Morrison use is little to which may also not be such a bad thing because it provides a longer window of oppor make wise decisions.

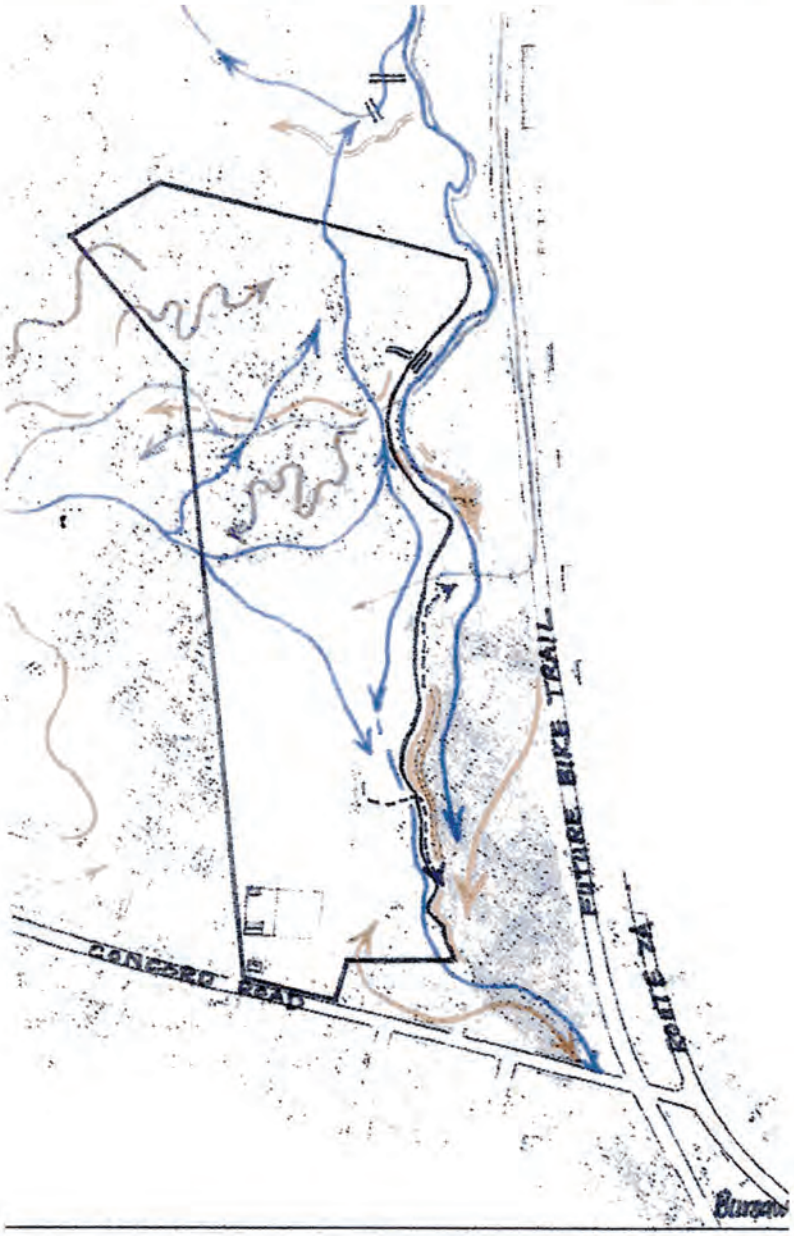
Otherwise, depending on the types of uses designated for the farm, independent sourc funding may become available, and efforts by community volunteers may provide the needed to garner funds for specific needs, once decided upon.

Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

WILDLIFE TRAILS observed at Morrison Farm
(from Gigi Hopkin's original)

Includes:

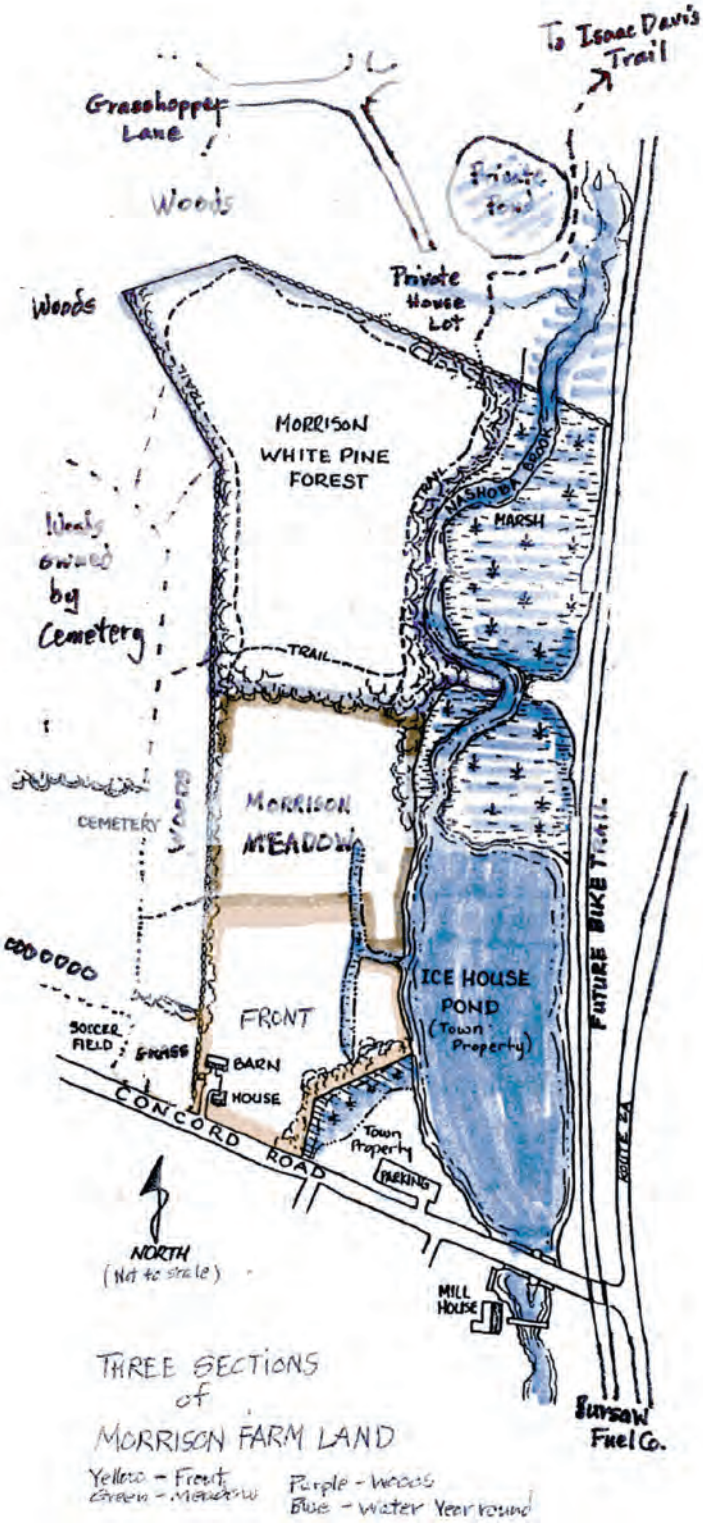
Red fox	River Otter	Beaver
Grey fox	Weasel or mink	Muskrat
Coyote	Racoon	Skunk
	Fisher	



(Does not include the ubiquitous whitetail deer)

Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

MAP of Morrison Farm and Environs (from Tom Tidman's original)



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

By finding answers to the right questions, numerous details are revealed and these lead quite naturally to a list of truly relevant possibilities for planning the use of the Morrison farm land for a wide variety of citizens.

A picture is worth a thousand words, so I have attached a rough drawing of how a Multi-Use Plan might work. Different areas of the property are labeled with possible uses. Below I list some of these possibilities.

Use of the Woods

The access path to and from Isaac Davis Trail, now bisected by a private house lot, may be renegotiated with minimal impact on the new house owners, by rerouting the trail. When traveling south by horseback, toward the Morrison farm, a stream on private property must be crossed. At this point, after the stream is crossed, it appears to be possible to make the trail turn a sharp left around a large tree. Traveling east for, perhaps, one hundred feet, the path would then bend to the right, following the wetlands for several hundred more feet, where the northern stonewall boundary of the Morrison property is encountered; a new opening would have to be made through this wall, so the new trail can quickly intersect with the major Morrison woodland trail.

Access can be cleared along the old bridge abutment which extends into Nashoba Brook; currently it is so overgrown as to be nearly impassable. A viewing and fishing area can be established here. Because this area is such an active wildlife corridor, and the terrain is fragile and prone to flooding, it would probably be best not to try re-connecting this abutment to the other side of the brook (where the bicycle trail will pass by). Instead, create a viewing area on both sides of the brook — it is a beautiful place for quiet observation.

Designating the Morrison Woods as Conservation Land would put it under the governance of the Conservation Commission and its subcommittee, the Land Stewards, whose task is to maintain conservation lands. This would help take the burden of maintenance off the town's budget to a large extent, since the Land Stewards are volunteers.

In order to acquire the grassy area behind the garage in the Front of the property, which is currently Cemetery land, it may be possible to "swap" a piece of Morrison Woods with the Cemetery Commission, so this easily accessible grassy patch up Front can be made part of the Morrison Multi-use land.

Use of the Meadow

The Morrison Meadow is irreplaceable as it is, as a visual amenity and a wildlife haven. If a bulldozer were to carve away at this terrain, classic farm vistas and the local ecology would be lost; a pity since such areas are rare, particularly in Acton. Every effort should be made to ensure that this part of the property, like the Woods, is protected for the long term.

If a regulation playing field were to be installed in the Front section of the property behind the barn, stretching to the boundary line of the Meadow (see map), and that area was not quite long enough, it may be possible to relocate the Meadow boundary line by pushing it slightly back (not too far!), as well as relocating the trail that cuts through the stone wall from Cemetery land. The objective is to maintain the natural Meadow vistas and "experience" as much as possible.

The Front of the property is the most appropriate place to encourage active recreational use. Not only is it easily accessible, via Concord Road and a sidewalk, it is close to East Acton Village, the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, and an extensive residential neighborhood.

One of the problems with access is by car --- there is almost no parking on-site. It may be possible, with some clever engineering, to create a functional but low-profile parking circle (counterclockwise) in what is now the large paddock to the right of the house. Such a design would have to address the problem of nearby wetlands. And lots of fill would have to be brought in to level it. A number of tall pine trees would have to be cut down. In addition, an earth berm or some other natural-looking visual screen would have to be devised to reduce the visual impact of a parking lot; perhaps the lot can also be "sunken" a little bit. Pedestrian access to and from a parking lot would have to be easy for everyone, requiring ramps, as needed, in addition to steps. All of this will require professional expertise. Parking, if installed on the property, is likely to be the most expensive project.

Although the House is in good shape, using it for public recreational purposes is a problem, because retrofitting it for handicapped access is prohibitively expensive. It may be worth investigating passing the house into the custody of the Housing Authority, so it can be used or lived in without town leaders as landlord. Use of the House should be resolved quickly because unused buildings deteriorate quickly.

Although not a particularly sturdy structure (currently held together with a cable), the Barn is in good condition. Panels that serve to create horse stalls can be removed to open up the downstairs space for recreational use under cover, an asset for (say) a Natural History Camp program that could be offered by the Recreational Department. The huge back door of the barn can be opened so kids can race into the expansive grasslands behind. An old outdoor horse shelter/storage shed behind the barn is in bad shape and should be removed. A wall tacked into a "car port" attached to the west side of the barn can be removed to make the carport drive-through, a more versatile space for machinery and persons afoot.

The large, expansive grass field behind the barn is most easily and cheaply maintained as a mowed, fenced area available for many types of free play. The fence should be wooden (post and rail?) and low-profile (not high), and the lower half can have wire mesh attached to create an enclosed Dog Park. Mesh fencing would also serve to keep balls from being kicked outside the area, and to keep trash in. Various gates here and there would improve access from various other points on the property.

A Community Garden can be created in the lower pasture, accessible via a wide grassy path behind the new parking area. Water is readily accessible from Ice House Pond.

The grassy area behind the garage, owned by the Cemetery, is a natural extension to the farm and it is worth investigating whether it can be acquired for recreational use (not a parking lot). It is such a nice space to be in, it would be lovely to make it available to the children of Acton.

CONCLUSION

The Multi-Use Plan I have proposed is simply an idea of how best to serve the most citizens in Acton, while also cherishing the agricultural heritage of the town as well as an unusually nice piece of landscape. I trust the Morrison Committee will give due consideration to this approach.

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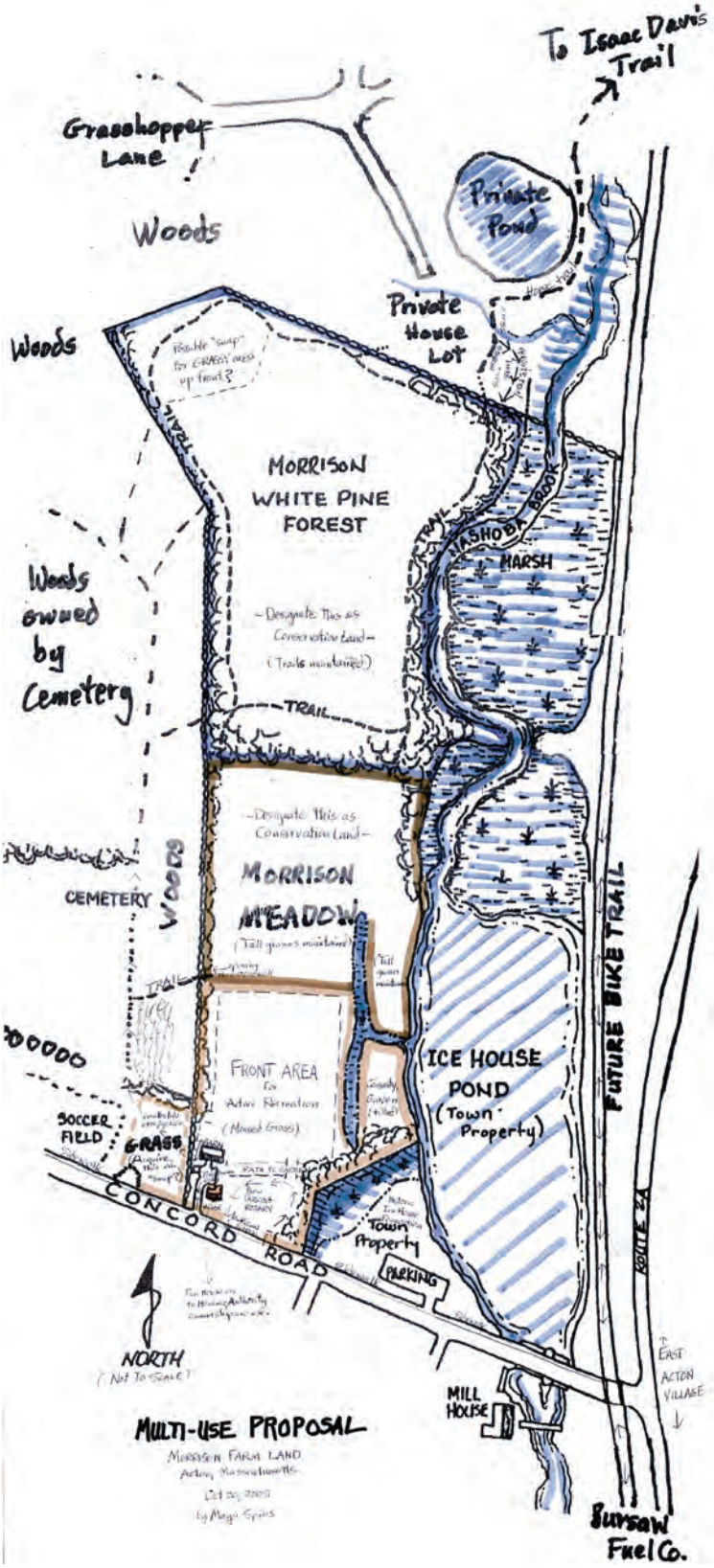
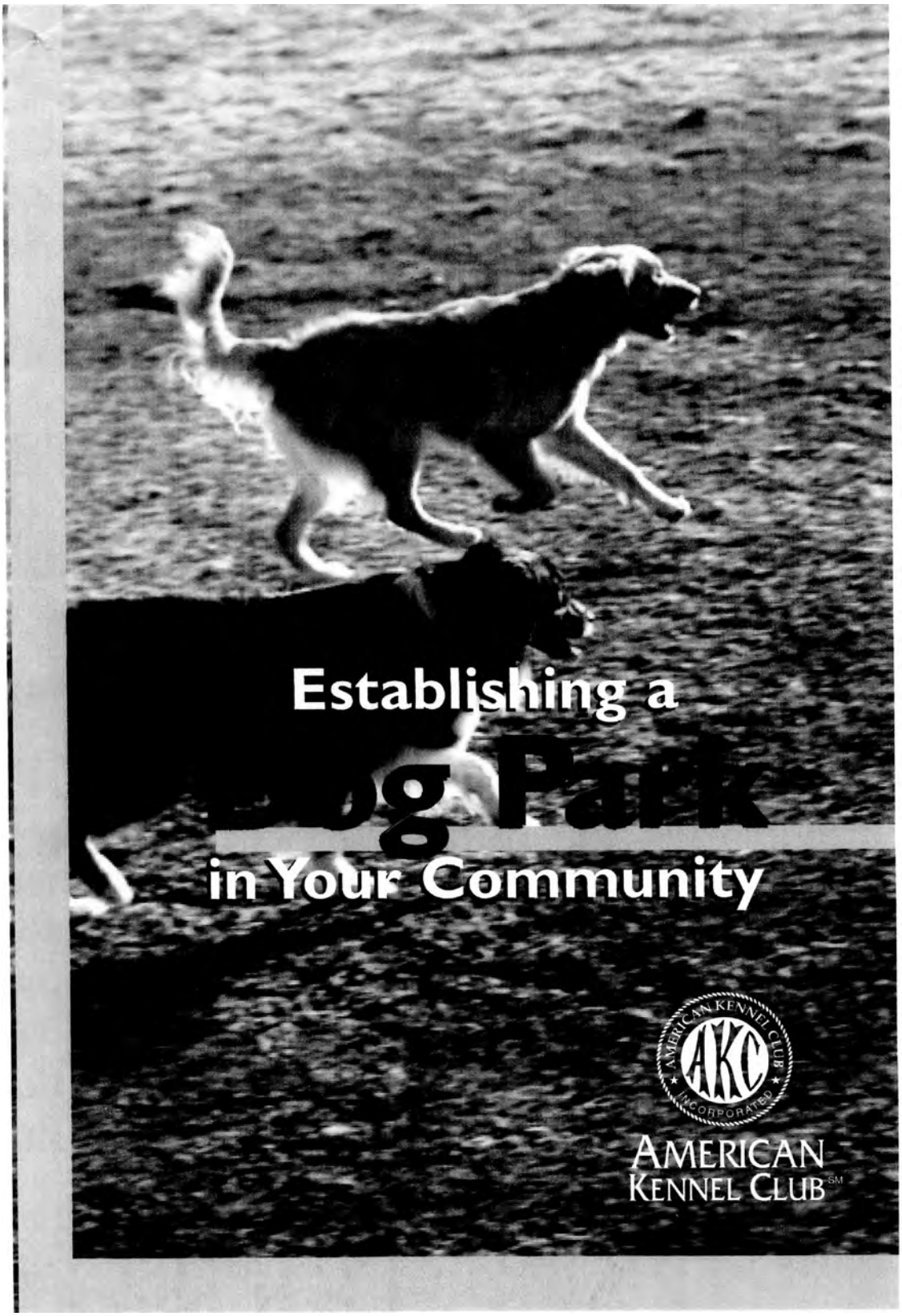
Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued



Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued



What Is a Dog Park and How Does It Benefit the Community?

With cities becoming more and more crowded and leash laws becoming more restrictive, many concerned dog owners are looking to the creation of dog parks as a solution to their need for a place to spend quality time with their pets. But just what is a "dog park," and what benefits can one bring to your city or town?

A dog park is a public park, typically fenced, where people and their dogs can play together. Similarly, a dog run is a smaller fenced area, created for the same use, that is often located within an existing park. As the names imply, these places offer dogs off-leash play areas where their owners can enjoy a park-like setting and the chance to socialize with other canines and their owners. Dog parks, which are sometimes managed by park users in conjunction with city or town officials, are being established all over the country and offer a wealth of benefits to dogs, dog owners and the community as a whole.

Dog parks offer canines and their owners a safe place to socialize.

AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB™ 1

More than just "room to roam," the creation of a dog park . . .

Allows dogs to exercise and socialize safely. Puppies and adult dogs need room to run, and enclosed play areas permit them to do so while preventing them from endangering themselves and others (for example, by running into the path of an oncoming vehicle). In addition, dogs who are accustomed to playing with animals and people other than their owners are more likely to be well-socialized and react well toward strangers.

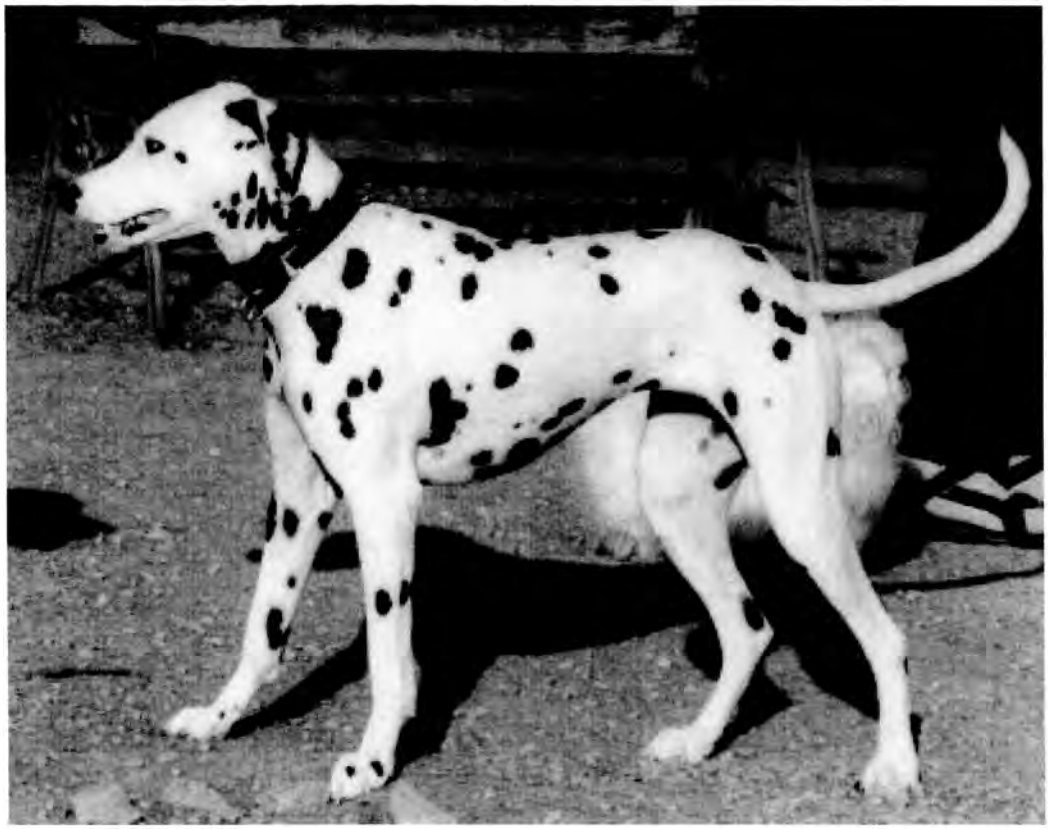
Promotes responsible dog ownership. Dog parks prevent off-leash animals from infringing on the rights of other community residents and park users such as joggers, small children, and those who may be fearful of dogs. Parks also make it easier for a city to enforce its leash laws, as resident dog owners with

Enclosed play areas for exercise make dogs better-adjusted neighbors.

park access have no reason to allow their canine companions off-leash when outside of the park.

Provides an outlet for dog owners to socialize. Dog parks are a great place for owners to meet other people with common interests. The love people share for their dogs reaches beyond economic and social barriers and helps foster a sense of community. Park users also benefit from the opportunity to ask questions of other owners and find solutions to problems they might be having with their pet.

Makes for a better community by promoting public health and safety. Well-exercised dogs are better neighbors who are less likely to create a nuisance, bark excessively and destroy property. Their presence in the park, along with their owners, also may help deter crime.



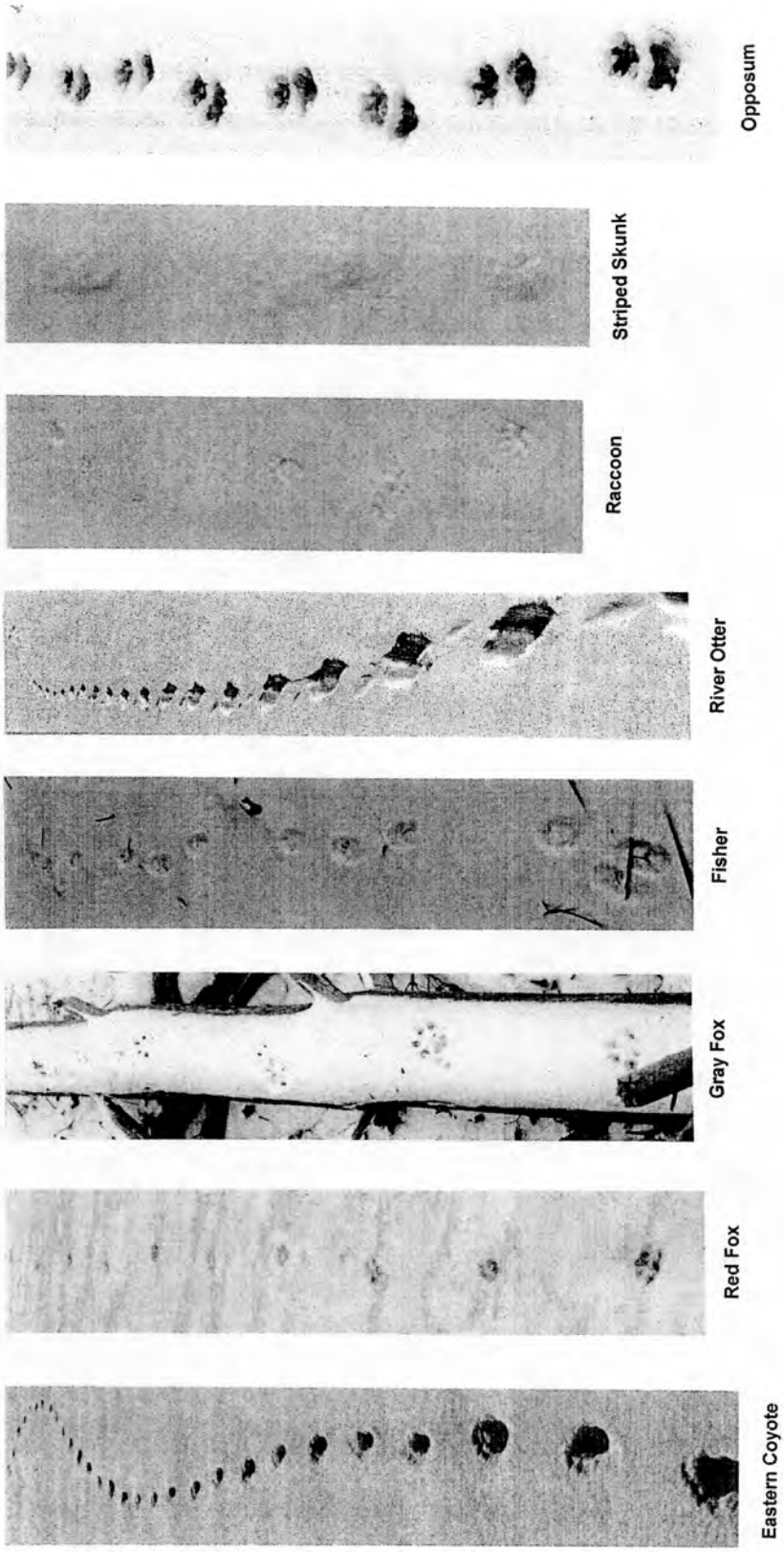
AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB™ 3

Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

A SAMPLING OF ANIMAL TRAILS PHOTOGRAPHED IN AND AROUND MORRISON LAND
Does not include the ubiquitous white-tail deer

Coyote
Red fox
Grey fox
Raccoon
Fisher
River otter
Weasel or mink
Beaver
Muskrat
Striped skunk
Opposum

Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

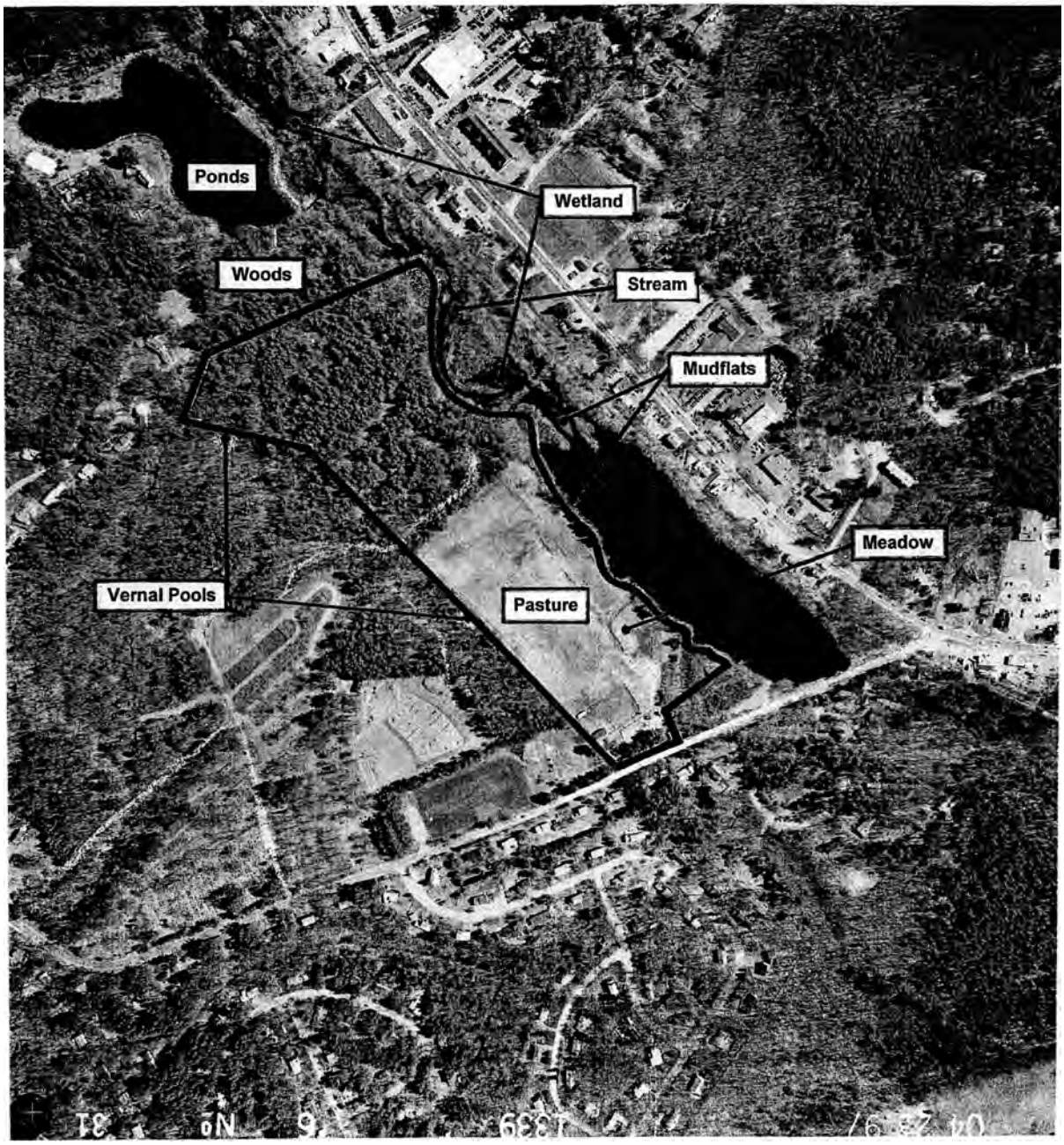


TRACKS & TRAILS

Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

THE VARIED HABITATS IN AND AROUND THE MORRISON LAND;

Pasture, meadow, ponds, mudflats, stream, wetland, two vernal pools and woods



Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

THE ACTON BARN at Morrison Farm

Morrison Farm Re-Use Committee Meeting
November 10, 2005

The Acton Barn Background

- The Acton Barn Cooperative Nursery School has served Acton since 1970
- Originally founded by Acton residents Lees Stuntz, Gail Michael, Joe and Sandy Bayne, JoAnne Carpenter, Marion Maxwell, Jane Philbin and operated out of their homes.
- In 1972, the Acton Barn moved to a small house at 311 Central Street that was purchased through a promissory note signed by Jan and Mark Bramhall, Tom and Libby Barnett, and Stephen and Lees Stuntz.
- In 1992, the Barn moved its present location at 32 Nagog Park.
- 501-3C Non-Profit Corporation
- Typical operation hours are 9 AM to 3:15 PM, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and 9 AM to 2:30 PM on Thursday and Friday during the school calendar year
- See attached History and Mission

Our Proposal

- Our proposal is to enter into a lease agreement and improve the home located at Morrison Farm to relocate The Acton Barn program to the new facility
- Proposed improvements include:
  - Renovate and update the interior and exterior of the existing home
  - Construct an addition of about 1,500 s.f. onto the existing home
  - Required parking spaces for 10 vehicles (construct new or share parking with other programs proposed for the property)
  - Construct 2,500 s.f. of playground space for the school children

Benefits

- Our proposal includes renovation and maintenance of an existing town building thus eliminating a maintenance obligation for the town
- Some of the renovated and/or constructed space could be used by other programs proposed for the property
- The Acton Barn program is compatible with all other programs that are being proposed for the property

The Acton Barn Cooperative Nursery School
32 Nagog Park Acton, Massachusetts 01720 978-263-0486

Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

History and Mission of The Acton Barn

The Acton Barn Cooperative, Inc. is a very special collaborative learning environment. Parents and children come together with an exceptional teaching staff in order to create a warm and supportive first school experience. The Barn is the kind of place that reaches out into the community in order to help others whenever possible. The program has been in operation since 1974. Since that time, the school has successfully grown and matured into a well-respected program, recognized by both state and national organizations.

The Barn is currently located in a specially built schoolhouse, in Acton, Massachusetts that first opened for the 1992-1993 school year. The building was developed with input from Barn families, professional staff, the architectural firm of Katherine McGuiness and Associates, renowned for their work in preschool educational spaces, the developer, Kirk Ware, and his architect Albert Fine.

The guiding design principle for the building was to provide "a warm, inviting educational environment for young children." One of the many special features is a floor to cathedral ceiling wooden climber with soft curves for exciting play or quiet moments. The open floor plan, including a kitchen work area for cooking projects, houses a broad spectrum of materials and supplies all of which foster the social, emotional, cognitive and physical growth of young children. An excellent array of play equipment is available in the fenced-in play yard such as a large sandbox, a playhouse, swings, and climbers.

Raw materials, with some prepared materials, are made available because they can be used in accordance with each child's intent and perception. The materials may include all manner of things from paper and scissors to string, boxes, bottles, magnets, paint, clay, water, sand, blocks, wood and snow. Places within the school are regularly transformed with card board, paint and creativity to reflect the current topic of study.

Dramatic play, art, music, woodworking, building, cooking, and a wide variety of manipulatives and games are available to the children on a daily basis. Science, language arts and math are also a part of the Barn's curriculum. In an informal manner, children are encouraged to develop what are generally considered to be "school readiness" skills.

The Barn was founded in the 1970's by several Acton area families. These families were committed to the value of family involvement in early education. To them, the parent cooperative, with a focus on learning through play was the ideal model for the program they wished to create.

Today the Barn remains a highly parent driven organization. Every family participates in the school's fundraising efforts, helps in the classroom on a regular basis, and shares responsibility for cleaning and maintaining the building. All of the families are welcomed and encouraged to attend monthly board meetings and one third actively participate on the general board.

Throughout its thirty-year history, the Barn has sought to employ teachers who were capable of working with young children and parents. In 1980, Harriet Kaufman became the first Director of the school. Harriet brought with her a clear statement of the importance of emergent curriculum, developmentally appropriate practice, and a respect and openness to difference in our school and community.

Harriet retired in 2000. She currently serves as the curriculum consultant for the school. Her input and ideas continue to shape the direction of the educational program.

Currently, Carol Pikcilingis serves in a dual role as Teacher and Director. Carol came to the Barn initially having worked as a pediatric nurse at Boston Children's Hospital, with a focus on psychosomatic illness in young children and family counseling. Carol has a degree in Human Development from Lesley University with a specialization in early intervention.

Joining the Barn as a classroom teacher in 1984, Carol took on increasing roles of responsibility and eventually became the Director in charge of day to day operations in 1989. Carol continues to place great emphasis on the importance of creative, developmentally appropriate practice and strives to create a warm, nurturing community for the children and families. Teachers, families and children work together towards this goal.

In addition to her responsibilities as Director, Carol is active in the professional community. Carol is involved in the Early Childhood council, Community Partnership for Children, Department of Education study groups for Early Childhood Guidelines and attendance at Institutes and conferences in the Boston area.

Nancy Tang serves as a teacher and the Assistant Director of the Barn. As Assistant-Director, Nancy supports Carol in the day-to-day activities required for a smooth running operation. Nancy came to the Barn in 1997, with a M.Ed. in elementary education from Boston College.

Nancy brings great experience from her work in a multicultural setting in Chinatown, Boston, where Nancy helped run a large after school program. Nancy then operated her own family day care for 10years. Nancy has a strong commitment to children and families, with an emphasis on the importance of acceptance of diversity in our communities. Nancy is representative of the entire staff in that she values the richness of the parent cooperative.

Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

In addition to Carol and Nancy, the Barn has an excellent staff of four experienced, and professionally trained, teachers. All staff members participate in monthly staff planning meetings, and are welcome to attend board meetings as well. Each year staff members attend workshops and training sessions to update themselves on new teaching methods and ideas.

There are fewer and fewer programs for young children in place that truly allow self-directed learning to occur. The Barn offers families the opportunity to actively participate in their child's first educational experience and to role model for their children the passion and interest they themselves have for learning. Research has repeatedly shown that parental involvement in the school environment is a strong predictor of success.

The Barn is also unique is its commitment to keeping the costs of the program as low as possible. This is done in order to offer families with diverse income levels an opportunity to feel welcomed into the community. The school also regularly sets aside part of its budget to provide scholarship money to families in need.

The educational program at the Barn is designed to foster the social, emotional, cognitive and physical growth of young children. "Learning through play" best summarizes the Barn's philosophy. No distinction is made between what is work and what is play. Dramatic play, art, music, woodworking, cooking and a wide variety of toys and games are available to the children on a daily basis. Materials are located where children can reach them without adult assistance. Children are encouraged to "learn by doing" and to become successful on their own terms by becoming involved in their own learning.

The Barn is also a strong partner with many other community groups and organizations. As the state of Massachusetts has turned its attention to setting curricular goals and guidelines for preschool that align with the statewide curricular frameworks, our parents and teachers have taking an active role in the process. When the first draft was put out for review, several parents took the time to read the draft and provide comments, and our teaching staff did the same. This year our staff put together and presented several workshops for other preschool educators on how to incorporate the history, social science and math standards into basic classroom activities including creative and developmentally appropriate ways to document these efforts.

Our Director has been actively involved with the Early Childhood Council, acting as the current Co-Chair, and past coordinator of the Week of the Young Child celebration, a community wide program for families from Acton, Boxborough and Littleton, that helps to promote early literacy and a greater understanding of the developmental and educational needs of young children. For the past three years the school has hosted events and parents

from the school have helped to lead and design these related activities within the community.

The school is always welcoming to student teachers in need of a place to do their teaching, Girl Scout groups looking for an audience, community outreach programs from local elementary schools looking for children to work with as "Book buddies" and even doctors from the University of Massachusetts medical program who are doing their family medicine rotation and in need of exposure to normal developmentally appropriate preschool behavior. As part of the cooperative model of the school, the Barn is an excellent partner with many other groups of children, educators and professionals.

The Barn has consistently earned high praise from those who come in contact with its programs and children. State and national level certification professionals have consistently given the school high marks. The Barn received NAEYC accreditation in 2002 and receives biannual recertification through rigorous Massachusetts Office for Child Care Service licensing, both utilizing self study, involved documentation of the program and intensive on site inspections.

Recently, the school earned recognition for its efforts to create an innovative policy and program to deal with the needs of children with anaphylactic food allergies. Steve Schulman, an Assistant Deputy at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, worked closely to assist the school in developing one of the first food allergy policies for preschoolers in the state. Both inclusive and open, it sought to address children with many levels of food allergy difficulties, while maintaining the important family involvement in our school's daily snack. We have been asked to share our work in this area with programs in other Massachusetts communities.

The Barn is currently involved in collaboration with University of Massachusetts Medical Center to provide onsite visitation for residents in their Family Practice group. This elective allows the doctors to gain a view of the broad range of typically developing children and to experience developmentally appropriate practice in an early childhood classroom.

At the Barn the staff and parents are able to draw on each other's unique strengths, making each year a richer educational experience. The willingness of the people involved with the school to then extend this learning to others within the larger community makes the school a special and important resource for more than the approximately sixty families who may attend the school at any point in time. This school is an important resource for the community and is in need of investment from others to protect it going forward into the future.

In keeping with our financial goals, the Barn employs a variety of austerity measures in all aspects of our programs.

- Almost all of the raw materials utilized in the educational activities are donated by the community and members.

- Parents and community members are encouraged to recycle certain materials for reuse in educational activities.

- Barn members are responsible for most janitorial and cleaning activities.

- Spending is tightly controlled by the Director and the Board.

- Parents of children provide food and beverages for daily snack activities.

- Programs offered by the Barn must be at least revenue neutral and preferably be able to generate small amounts of surplus.

- Fundraising goals are very aggressive representing 15% of the total operating budget.

As a largely parent run organization, the Barn does all it can to control and minimize costs. However, there are several factors, including the pending implementation of statewide standards that increase the educational levels required for staff and the continuing escalation of our rental costs, that have led the leadership of the school to conclude that there is a need for more concentrated fundraising efforts to continue to keep the school one that is accessible to families of all income levels.

The school is hoping to take the steps necessary to purchase its current home within the next few years. We have already secured the backing of the USDA to guarantee our loan in this endeavor, as well as the support of Middlesex Savings Bank, who is willing to fund the loan. In addition to efforts to get a major capital campaign underway, we wish to protect our scholarship programs. We are hoping to find additional sources of revenue for both of these projects.

At the Acton Barn Cooperative Nursery School, parents and children come together with an exceptional teaching staff in order to create a warm supportive first school experience. Founded in the 1970's, the Barn has always been committed to the value of family involvement in early education.

The Barn places a great deal of emphasis on the importance of creative, developmentally appropriate practices, and strives to create a warm, nurturing community for children and families. The educational program at the Barn is designed to foster the social, emotional, cognitive and physical growth of young children. "Learning through play" best summarizes the Barn's philosophy.

Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

The Barn has consistently earned high praise from those who come in contact with its programs and children. State and national level certification professionals have consistently given the school high marks. The Barn is an excellent partner with many other groups of children, educators and professionals in surrounding communities.

The Barn is committed to keeping its programs accessible to families of diverse income levels. The Barn is seeking philanthropic investment in its programs in order to protect needs blind participation as it seeks to acquire its current facility. We very much appreciate interest in our program.

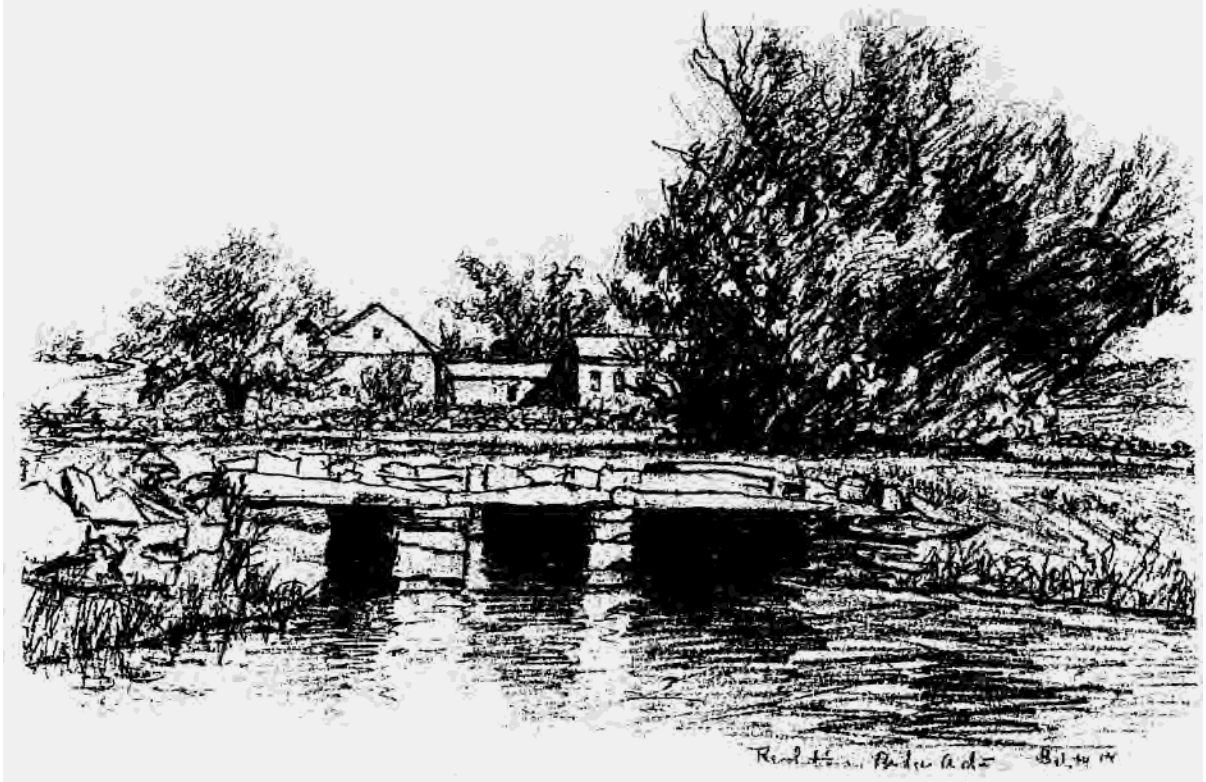
Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

Morrison Farm Reuse Committee Bridge Presentation

It is unclear when the bridge crossing Nashoba Brook was first erected and for what use it served. However, Arthur Davis drew a picture of it in 1927 as shown on this page. It is described a Worden's Swimming Hole and the bridge sits to the north.

Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

Another example of a bridge in Acton. This bridge currently is on the Conant property and is part of the Isaac Davis Trail.



Revolution Era Bridge Acton

ne who walks the Isaac Davis Trail has walked over this bridge on the Conant property. The bridge and associate were abandoned in 1808 but line up perfectly with Strawberry Hill Road. The house with barn in the background w the site of Coach Estates at 53 & 55 Brook Street. The main portion of the house was moved to 160 Great Road several decades ago.

Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

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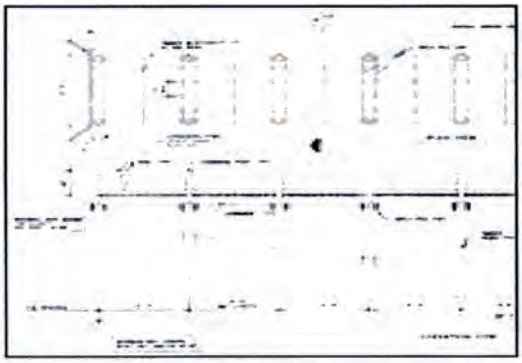

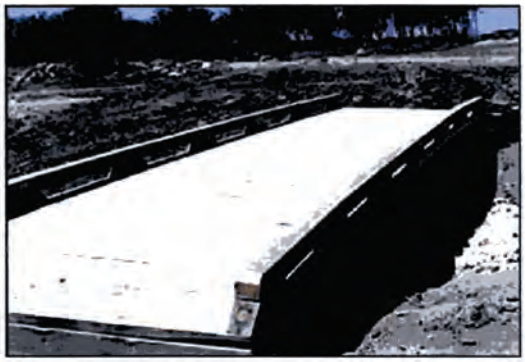

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Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

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Aldrich Change Bridge Home Page

Aldrich Change Bridge. **Documentation & Restoration**

Outdoors Newsletter Nov 2002

PROJECT OVERVIEW

In January 1997 after months of preparation, a dedicated group of volunteers made a dramatic rescue from a farm stream in Macedon, NY. The bridge they saved, the Aldrich Change Bridge, is the only surviving canal change bridge and the oldest cast and wrought-iron vehicular bridge in New York State, and possibly the United States. This unique historic artifact, built in 1858 and located in Rochester before being moved to the Macedon-Palmyra line in 1880, will be restored and installed near its original location on the Towpath Trail in Aqueduct Park. Visitors will be able to walk or bike up and over the bridge in just the same way the mules and horses did over 100 years ago, as they made their way from the south to the north side of the Canal.

Eric DeLony, Chief of the Historic American Engineering Record of the National Park Service will be documenting the bridge for a record in the Library of Congress. At a visit to view the bridge he said, "This is the most important ongoing bridge restoration project in the country."

Project Coordinator: Jay Harding
Project Timeline: Spring 2003
Project Budget: $210,000 (HUD)

PROJECT UPDATE:

From Bert Olton (11-5-02)

We have finished the assembly of the old Erie Canal Aldrich Change Bridge. It now sits on the ground approximately 70 feet west of where it will be placed, hopefully next spring or summer. Several members of our committee are now working on acquiring the last of the stones

needed to complete the abutments for the bridge. We've spoken with crane services about lifting the bridge and swinging it over to the abutments. Our next steps are to get the abutments finished, set the bridge in place, re paint it, build the ramps and pond.

Courtesy Beth Hoad
Prior to collapse
The bridge in its location on Creek Road, Macedon

Appendix 2: Proposals from town boards, continued

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Appendix 3: The Morrison Community Organic Farm (MCOF)

General Background:

The Morrison Farm Property has been in agricultural use since the original 1669 Thomas Wheeler Grant. The Land Stewardship Committee recommends that this remarkable 337-year history be respected, kept intact, and brought forward by developing the south portion of the property into a Community Organic Farm.

The property takes its present name from John and Elizabeth Morrison, who purchased the property in 1954 from Edward L. Forbes. For the next 35 years, Elizabeth (Betty) Morrison ran a small riding stable on the property, teaching local children horsemanship and a love of animals.

The property, 32 acres of pasture, woodlands, and wetlands, is one of the last remaining vestiges of Acton's rural past. Maintaining a significant portion of the property as a Community Organic Farm will preserve for current and future generations a sense of Acton's agricultural past, qualities of Acton that are rapidly disappearing. Moreover, a Community Organic Farm will use this beautiful remnant of Acton's history in a way that honors that heritage and offers all Acton residents activities that have lifelong appeal and can provide a focal point for intergenerational community involvement.

The recommendations presented below are based in large part on the experiences of the Natick Community Organic Farm, a very successful farm that has been in operation for more than 25 years. Several other similar farms were visited and consulted as well (see Models section below).

Farm Mission:

The mission of the MCOF will be to maintain open space through sustainable organic agriculture and foster an awareness of where our food comes from. This mission will be accomplished through the following goals:

- Provide fresh, organically-grown produce to the community.
- Offer hands-on, real-world learning experiences for Acton residents of all ages.
- Provide recreational activities involving farm-based traditions.
- Foster a conservation ethic and active citizenship.
- Foster an appreciation of the natural world.

Farm Goals:

The MCOF will provide for Acton residents of all ages hands-on educational experiences, exercise, and the satisfaction of seeing the fruits of their own labor. Moreover, the experience of working on a farm, besides bringing personal contentment, promotes a deeper understanding of the impact humans have on the natural world and a greater respect for all living things.

The MCOF will practice sustainable organic agriculture. This means agricultural practices will adhere to the principles of nature itself; they will protect and add value to the farm, its soils and water, rather than depleting or contaminating them while producing food in the form of crops and livestock. 'Organically Grown,' now a legal term, prohibits the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides because it includes consideration of long-term ecological outcomes. Coincidentally, this mindset perfectly parallels the Land Stewardship Committee's guiding philosophy in caring for the town's conservation lands.

Appendix 3: The MCOF, continued

Farm Development:

If approved, the MCOF will develop in phases over the next 2-3 years. We envision the farm's growth as a slow and deliberative process, dictated by the wishes and needs of both Acton's families and its school system. Such a community farm would provide activities for every age group, a farm garden with produce stand during the summer, and community garden plots, as well as children's gardens. Self-picking activities would be provided by berry patches (blueberry, blackberry, and raspberry; perhaps strawberry); and by a cutting- flower garden.

According to staff at the Natick Community Organic Farm, animals are the key to success. Livestock, gradually assimilated into the farm's programs, would eventually include rabbits, laying hens, turkeys, milking goats, and sheep. Young people's farm classes would include the care and enjoyment of these animals.

The open hayfield, lower meadow, pond-edge, and woodland all provide perfect habitats for nature and art classes for all ages. The schools, adults, and farm programs and personnel would work in concert to develop appropriate areas for study. These programs would be gradually implemented as volunteers and liaisons are established.

An LSCom-maintained trail system through the entire 32 acres would provide year-round access for passive recreation. Seasonally, the farm would sponsor appropriate festivals: strawberry fest, Easter egg hunt, birthing time, pumpkin harvest, and barbequing are only a few of the possibilities.

Building Uses:

Barn: We envision a restored barn, opened up internally, and glassed around long portions of the north and east walls, both for the views and for solar heat. Horse stalls and other partitions would be removed. Wide, sliding glass doors on both the south and north faces would promote a feeling architecturally of an integrated indoor/outdoor interface. A generous deck, with stone ramp, abutting portions of the building's north and east walls would provide areas for barbecuing, outdoor classes, picnicking, and many other informal activities through summer and fall. The view would be sweeping. The loft would remain for storage purposes. A small workshop and storage area for small tools and supplies would be provided either within the barn proper or in some portion of the attached carport, structurally reinforced and walled in.

Farm uses would include a farm office, and farm classrooms for indoor art and nature studies.

The opened-up first floor area would provide a venue for other community activities representative of an earlier, rural time; many communities are experiencing a resurgence of interest in square dancing and round dancing, quilting parties, folk singing, potluck suppers with evening speaker, etc. The space could also be rented out for more 'modern' activities, such as conferences, corporate retreats, and, of course, weddings, birthdays, Eagle Scout Courts of Honor, and coming-of-age celebrations.

House: The house needs to be brought up to code, and the kitchen and bathroom modernized to make a comfortable home for a caretaker, with family if needed. The caretaker would, for minimal or no rent, care for the livestock and tend gardens when regular farm programs were not in session; perform routine, minor maintenance of the buildings; and direct the land's best use. The caretaker(s) could either be a family seeking a farm life, or one or more graduate students studying agricultural programs.

Appendix 3: The MCOF, continued

Garage: The garage would be used for the storage of large farm machinery.

Shed: The three-sided shed nearest the meadow would need renovation, but would provide shelter for sheep and goats in severe weather.

Chicken coop: The present chicken house would be moved to the area between the barn and animal shed and would provide nesting boxes for the hens.

Rabbit hutches: A few already exist; others could be built by the High School shop manager.

Paddocks: The forward (south) paddock would be used for expansion animal pasture in future. The rear (north) paddock is the preferred location for the farm's children's vegetable gardens. Community garden plots would be located beyond the north paddock fence.

Greenhouse: Eventually, a greenhouse will be needed. It should be located to take advantage of a southern exposure.

Other Farm Areas:

Hen yard and livestock pasture: The area between the north side of the barn and the open-sided shed would provide a hen yard, places for rabbit hutches, and an enclosure for goats and sheep. If the livestock were pastured in the south paddock, the cut-flower garden could be located in this area as well. There is both sun and water available, as well as easy access to the gardens from the grassy track that leads through this area to the main open hayfield.

Community garden plots: These would be located beyond the north paddock's north fence. This area has been tested for soil suitability. It has plenty of sun. Outside water already on the property could be brought further up.

Children's garden: The north paddock would contain the children's garden and possibly the cutting garden. This arrangement would allow the educational activities to be centralized around the barn, the paddocks, and the various sheds.

Berry patches: Berry bushes could be grown anywhere beyond the shed and the north fence of the north paddock, as well as along the east wall of the same paddock. These areas are suitable soil- and sun-wise, and the shrubby plants would provide some wind break and predatory animal protection for the more tender plants within the paddock area.

Other Farm Uses:

Other farm uses that would encourage community involvement could include pony rides for children carried out by the equestrians; Fall harvest festival; Easter egg hunt; winter solstice observation; Fourth of July barbecue and folk music gathering; meteor shower viewing; sugaring off gathering; annual Scottish Games event, sponsored locally, and on and on.

Parking:

Parking has been the single most challenging issue that the MFRC has considered. Not wanting to pave over any portion of the 32-acre parcel, an expansion of the present Ice House Pond parking area is favored. Further pocket parking spaces and expansion, and use of the cemetery soccer field, as discussed in the main recommendations document are favored.

Appendix 3: The MCOF, continued

It should be noted that there is sufficient space for lined parking on the grassy area along the west fence of the north paddock between the track that leads to the open hayfield and the area reserved for the livestock pasture. This grassy area would be used for temporary parking for dropping-off and picking-up for people and supplies related to the gardens. There is space for a turn-around area.

These parking spaces are consistent with the amount of parking space currently needed by the Natick Community Organic Farm.

Volunteers:

An important premise for all of these recommendations is that a great deal of the work would be provided, at least initially, and most likely for time to come, by volunteers. Such organizations as the Boy and Girl Scouts, the 4-H clubs, other interest groups, and, as the school programs come on line, the children and supervising adults, would all contribute to the effort. The Northeast Correctional Center could be engaged to provide heavy equipment as well as labor for the heavier tasks. Prisoners could be scheduled to work when children are not present.

With appropriate publicity, many materials needed to operate the programs could be donated. As an example, items such as used egg crates could be donated for packaging of the hen's eggs. The list is long.

Models:

Consultations with the heads of several community organic farms in the Middlesex county area indicate that having a clear mission, starting small, establishing achievable goals, and engaging the schools, community organizations, and residents are all essential for the farm to be successful. Just as important is having a dedicated, knowledgeable, and personable caretaker who is committed to sustainable organic agriculture and to working with and educating people of all ages. The LSCom is committed to heeding this advice and will work with the community to create programs that fit the interests, talents, and skills of Acton residents.

Area farms that we have consulted, used as models for this proposal, and that have eagerly offered assistance to help us get started are the Natick Community Organic Farm, Concord's Gaining Ground, Lincoln's Codman Farm, and Weston's Land's Sake. Other nearby resources include Audubon's Drumlin Farm.

Phases:

All the farms that we consulted stressed starting small. Building up livestock, types of produce, farm programs, and school interfaced programs, as well as programs for adults, should be carried out gradually over time, allowing one effort to mature before initiating another. Accordingly, we suggest below four phases that would lead to a modest, early implementation of the farm concept. The guidelines below show a breakout of a possible fully functional farm 15 or 20 years out.

Please note that these guidelines are organized according to separate components of the farm implementation, and do not therefore correlate exactly with the timeline included in the main recommendations. To some extent one or more of these activities could be taking place concurrently.

Appendix 3: The MCOF, continued

Phase 1: Reclaim the land and establish gardens

- restore and replenish the pastures
- establish community garden plots
- establish the main farm garden (vegetables, berries, and flowers for cutting)

Phase 2: Community involvement

- establish relationships with community organizations (e.g., Acton Garden Club, Acton Historical Society, Acton Lion's Club, etc.)
- establish working relationships with Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and 4-H Clubs, etc.
- raise funds for Phase 3

Phase 3: Restore/refurbish buildings

- refurbish the farmhouse for caretaker occupancy
- refurbish housing for chickens, rabbits, and goats
- redesign and renovate the barn for farm and community activities
- build a greenhouse

Phase 4: Caretaker and educational programs

- hire a caretaker
- develop educational programs with the Acton schools and with Acton Community Education
- begin raising animals

Example of Hands-on Learning: The Vegetable Garden

- plan the garden: what to grow, where to plant, when to plant, how big? Draw a plot plan.
- soil test for pH, etc., and plan for adjustments if needed
- determine the sunny areas versus areas with shade
- order seeds (from where, how many), plant the seeds indoors, and care for them
- transplant seedlings, making sure they get enough sun, and caring for them
- establish a compost system
- plant the garden—spacing, how deep, mulch, supports
- keep garden weed-free, well-watered, and nourished
- Harvest—when, how, storage

Appendix 4: Stockman Report

Notes from Meeting with Ed Stockman, NOFA Representative
Morrison Farm, July 17, 2006

There is tremendous potential for a productive farm as well as a broad spectrum of educational programs on the Morrison Farm property. It is central to a dense population, which means it has superb marketing potential. Also, it is close to Drumlin Farm, which is a distribution center for Mass NOFA's bulk-order organic materials orders in the spring.

Supermarket food prices will exactly parallel our steadily increasing fuel costs. These increased costs result from transportation charges, as well as costs associated with operating large-scale farm-equipment and production. Small farms, like the Morrison Farm, will become critical as it becomes more important to grow produce locally. Conventional agriculture is the largest polluter in the U.S. and is responsible for 30% of pollution world-wide. Organic farming does not pollute.

There are different definitions of 'organic' within the context of farming. The USDA's definition is less stringent than many people engaged in small-scale organic agriculture would like (including many members of NOFA, which had stricter standards before the USDA set national organic standards in the 1990s). The Morrison Farm enterprise should decide on its definition and then make sure that anyone it hires to oversee the farm, or who has garden plots there, agrees with this definition.

Regarding the farm's produce garden, the size of the back paddock* is perfect as is. Ed feels that a successful farm starts small and expands only as required. An experienced farmer can usually get $20,000 from an acre by doing a succession of plantings.

Ed also offered that organic milk actually makes money, whereas conventionally-produced milk does not. One of the attendees, Ann Chang, observed that young mothers are now buying organic milk exclusively for their babies in an effort to avoid growth hormones and antibiotics.

Ed tested soils with an augur in both the open hayfield and within the back paddock. Most samples were classified as 'Hinckley' soils, which are excellent for farming with appropriate irrigation as needed. Hinckley soils tend to become droughty during dry spells. Therefore, it is critical to have access to enough water. In a dip toward the back of the open hayfield, the soils were more silty, but the samples returned to Hinckley as the testing neared the woodlands.

In meeting the field rotation requirement, the 'resting' field could be used for pasturing livestock. A certain portion of the open hayfield would need to be used to produce hay for the animals. If a square-baler is used, older children in the farm programs could move and stack the bales (round bales require a fork-lift for moving).

To prepare the field for planting, it would need to be brush hogged (or rototilled, in the case of the back paddock) and planted with a cover crop of oats and red or white clover. If the field is planted after Oct. 1, winter rye could be used. However, winter rye is more difficult to rototill under when it comes time for spring planting. If this treatment is done during the fall of 2006 and farming cannot commence in the spring of 2007, the field can be treated again in the fall of 2007.

As a necessary first step, the baseline soil pH must be determined. UMass Amherst provides an appropriate soil-testing service. Ed recommended taking soil samples from 5 equidistant spots in the back paddock area from the top 8-10" of soil, mixing these samples in a bucket, and sending a pound of the mixed soil to the testing service. This procedure should be repeated for the areas where we intend to grow blueberries, as this crop requires very acidic conditions.

Other observations of Ed's: The area is great bird habitat.

Soon the federal government will be providing credits for alternative energy uses, like solar. The farm could provide demonstrations and displays of alternative energy uses, which would generate educational benefit for the town. When the greenhouse is built, it should be solar-powered.

The mature pine woodlands provides another possible component for the farm. A modest forestry/timbering project could be implemented there, including demonstrations of low-impact oxen or horse-team log-removal. This pine forest is unusual in the quality of the trees, and both saw logs and possibly some veneers could be harvested before the trees begin to decline. The New England Forestry Foundation headquarters is located in Littleton, where information can be gathered.

In regard to the barn, judging from the barn's roofline, the building is in good condition. Stockman said he would have no real concerns about its structural integrity.

In regard to the back paddock fencing, it is attractive, defines the crop garden area nicely, and enhances the farm-ey look of the property. However, it would somewhat limit a tractor's ability to rototill into the corners and to brush hog fence line invasives.

It would be a real draw to borrow 2-3 beef steers from the prison, 4H, or some other source, and have them grazing in the front paddock until it is time to rototill the grass under. We might not want to do this until we had an overseer living in the house. But Concord's Sudbury Field cattle are untended.

Bottom Lines: Mr. Stockman was very encouraging and enthusiastic about the farming potential for this property. He also felt that it would be well suited for the planned educational programs. The proposed nature classes and other farm and gardening programs are unusual and exciting.

When informed of the requirement for a recreational field, he responded that it would be a misuse of this property to put either a parking area or a recreational field on it. It takes a great deal of work to reclaim from forest and stones an acre of land in New England and to make it into good farmland. Within the next 10 years it is likely that an already brewing agricultural crisis produced by climate change and energy issues will have grown so that all available farmland will need to be used for growing crops.

He said quite unequivocally that if a recreational field is required as part of the plan, it would be a much better use of the existing resources to take a portion of the pine woodlands for that purpose, running the access to it down the margin of the Morrison Farm property, than to put a playing field on the current high-grade agricultural land.

Note for future consideration: Beth Mullen (who attended the evaluation), a student from Acton who will be beginning her senior year at Sterling College in Vermont in the fall of 2007, would like to have the development of the community organic farm at Morrison Farm as her senior project. She observed that the Morrison Property is ideally situated for networking with the experienced and like-minded folks who run the cluster of already established farms in surrounding towns.