METACOMET LAND TRUST

The Metacomet Land Trust is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization dedicated to the protection of open space and natural resources in South Central Massachusetts. Metacomet proudly serves the communities of Bellingham, Blackstone, Douglas, Franklin, Hopedale, Mendon, Millbury, Millville, Norfolk, Northbridge, Sutton, Upton, Uxbridge, Webster, and Wrentham

**Please Join Us for Our Annual Meeting on Thursday, June 13, 2024**
**at 6:30 at Upton Community Center, 9 Milford Street (Route 140) in Upton.**

**The business meeting will be followed at 7:00 pm by a program on**
**People and Wildlife: Coexisting with Coyotes**
**presented by Meghan Crawford, a Community Engagement Biologist**

**The program is open to the public and the Community Center is handicapped accessible.**

## 2024 Annual Meeting Agenda

I. Meeting Called to Order
II. 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes
III. 2024 Annual Report, Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement
IV. Election of Directors to the Board
V. Adjourn

**Proxy Vote:**

**If you are not able to join the annual meeting**, please fill out and return this portion as your proxy. This will count toward the required quorum of 20 voting members or 20% of all dues-paying members (whichever is larger). Your proxy instructs Lisa Mosczynski, President, or Russell Holden, Vice President, to act on your behalf.

METACOMET LAND TRUST 2024 ANNUAL MEETING MEMBER PROXY. I authorize MLT Board President Lisa Mosczynski or Vice President Russell Holden to exercise my vote at the 2023 Annual Meeting for the ELECTION OF BOARD MEMBERS, APPROVAL OF 2023 MEETING MINUTES, APPROVAL OF THE 2024 ANNUAL REPORT, and any MOTIONS that come before the membership.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

SIGNATURE:: _____

Please mail your proxy to Metacomet Land Trust, PO Box 231, Franklin, MA 02038 to arrive no later than **Wednesday June 12, 2024**. You may also simply photograph the signed form and email the photo to **info@metacometlandtrust.org**.

***We Love Where We Live – And We Know You Do, Too!***

## President's Message

Dear Members and Friends:

Author Elizabeth Kolbert recently told the Boston Globe that a survey found that in these fraught times the best way to unite people is to focus on protecting what we love. I believe that's what Metacomet Land Trust is doing – uniting people around protecting what we love. Here is what we face trying to reach our goals:

**Pressure**. The challenges we face in our efforts to protect open space and our natural resources continue to grow. In many of our communities, the conversion of "raw" land into house lots has accelerated as generational change shifts property to family members less tied to the land and as road frontage lots disappear and developers push into back land.

**Price**. Land preservationists are increasingly in competition with the real estate market. Towns often can't compete with a market value sale of land even if they have a Chapter 61 right of first refusal. Without cultivating strong and creative partnerships with other conservation organizations and the Commonwealth, the land trust can't make an offer unless there is a willing and patient conservation-minded seller. It is always a very delicate negotiation and we endeavor to succeed whenever and wherever we can.

**People**. Our board members are incredibly dedicated volunteers. They attend our monthly meetings and official meetings in our communities, annually inspect every conservation restricted parcel, keep trails open, steward our properties, generate treasurer's reports, promote us on social media (plug here), edit our written ramblings and make us look great. Thank you all! But we recognize that we are an all-volunteer organization stretched to our limits and in 2024 we plan to begin an overdue major update to our Strategic Plan that will help us preserve more land, maintain high standards, identify opportunities to hire staff, use technology to free up time for other priorities, and peer into what our future as an organization might look like. In the meantime, we need volunteers to join our efforts whether it's joining our board or one of our sub-committees, being out in the field with an app like iNaturalist or AllTrails, helping us raise money for key projects, or posting on social media. Reach out and we'll be happy to tell you more!

Most humbly and in conservation,

*Lisa Mosczynski*

Lisa Mosczynski, President

Two guests, a dog, and a preponderance of MLT board members enjoyed a really nice Earth Day trail walk at Hop Brook. We used our newly-designed and printed banner to welcome everyone.

## Volunteers Welcome!

**Please Volunteer!** We need your help! The land trust depends on the generosity and spirit of volunteers to educate young and old about the environment around us and to help with due diligence in conducting stewardship inspections. Sign up at our website at https://tinyurl.com/jcuhdevw or email us at info@metacometlandtrust.org or call us at 508-271-7131 if you can help.

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## Board of Directors

The Metacomet Land Trust is governed by a Board of Directors elected by our members to three-year terms. Our Board of Directors includes representatives from towns throughout the service area, each of whom brings years of experience in local conservation and planning. You are welcome at all Board meetings; please email us to receive advance notice.

| | |
|---|---|
| **President** - Lisa Mosczynski, Douglas | (term expires 2026) |
| **Vice-President** - Russell Holden, Uxbridge | (term expires 2025) |
| **Treasurer** - Susan Speers, Franklin | (term expires 2025) |
| **Secretary** - Tom Bik, Blackstone | (term expires 2024)* ** |
| Kelly Phelan - Franklin | (term expires 2025) |
| Larry Rettman - Franklin | (term expires 2026) |
| Peg Rothwell, Hopedale | (term expires 2024)* |
| Patrice Murphy, Mendon | (term expires 2024)* |
| Barbara McNamee, Northbridge | (term expires 2025) |
| Steven Gniadek, Northbridge | (term expires 2025) |
| Michael Rodriguez, Providence | (term expires 2026) |
| Mike Penko, Upton | (term expires 2024)* |
| Christine Scott, Upton | (term expires 2025) |
| Ann Hanscom, Uxbridge | (term expires 2026) |

* Members' terms expiring, ** Founding Board Members
There is an open seat on the Board

Hop Brook – Earth Day Trail Walk – April 21st

## Coexisting with Coyotes - Our Annual Meeting on Thursday, June 13, 2024

Coexist or Compete? Come hear the perspective of Meghan Crawford a "Community Engagement Biologist" who has watched and learned from wild animals who might live in and around the back yards of suburban Massachusetts.

Photo by Bill Byrne - MassWildlife

Crawford works at the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) and in addition to her background in wildlife management, she has over 10 years of experience increasing the public's understanding of the natural world as a science educator in museums, zoos, and environmental education centers.

She is the author of a major article in the recent MassWildlife magazine which not only describes in detail the life and habits of our Eastern Coyotes, now prevalent around the Commonwealth, but she also tackles the issues which arise when coyotes arrive in residential areas. Her talk will include the reasons coyotes will frequent backyards and local parks as well as offer some suggestions on "hazing" individual animals so they learn to avoid people.

We invite you to bring friends and family to this program that promises to give us a unique perspective on our environment and one that will also help us better understand our role in it.

### How To Reach Us at The Metacomet Land Trust

**Call us** at 508-271-7131
**Email:** info@metacometlandtrust.org
**Website:** www.MetacometLandTrust.org
**Facebook:** https://www.facebook.com/MetacometLandTrust/

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## 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes

President Lisa Mosczynski welcomed members and called the meeting to order.

Seeing that there was a quorum including 11 proxies that the President would cast, the first order of business was to approve the 2023 Annual Meeting minutes. Motion by Tom Bik, second by Ann Hanscom. No questions or corrections were noted. Minutes were approved.

Tom Bik then moved to accept the Annual Report of 2023, the Treasurer's Report and the organization's Financial Statement. Seconded by Larry Rettman.

President Mosczynski moved to amend the list of the Board of Directors in the report to reflect the correct list of directors: Larry Rettman did not resign, Doug Williams resigned. Susan Speers seconded the motion. Amendment carried.

The Annual Report, Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement were approved unanimously.

Meeting members moved on to the election of board members. President Mosczynski recognized the terrific working relationship we have had with the two members who have resigned during this past year. She thanked Kyle Pribish of Norfolk and Doug Williams of Princeton for their generosity and service.

The President stated that nominations and the election of those running for re-election will be held first. Then nominations and the election of those seeking to fill vacant seats will he held.

Those running for re-election included Larry Rettman of Franklin, Michael Angelo Rodriguez of Providence, Ann Hanscom of Uxbridge and Lisa Mosczynski of Douglas. Peg Rothwell moved to nominate the slate for re-election. Seconded by Larry Rettman. Shirley Mosczynski moved to close nominations for re-election. Larry Rettman seconded the motion. Motion carried. The slate was then reelected unanimously. Congratulations!

There were openings for a one-year and a two-year seat on the Board. (Kyle '24 and Doug '25). Kelly Phelan was nominated for the two-year seat. There were no nominations for the one-year seat.

Shirley Mosczynski moved to close nominations for new directors. Larry Rettman seconded the motion. Motion carried. Motion to elect Ms. Phelan was carried unanimously. Congratulations were offered!

The last order of business was to vote to amend our articles of organization. These changes were proposed to clarify the organization's geographic area, membership requirements, purpose and succession of our assets should the organization ever have to dissolve. A copy of the original articles and a red-lined version were available for review on our website.

President Mosczynski entertained a motion to accept the amended Articles of Organization as printed in the 2023 Annual Report and to take any action necessary to file the new version with Commonwealth's Secretary of State. Motion made by Peg Rothwell and seconded by Susan Speers.

The President informed the members that the motion requires a 2/3rds vote to pass. Motion passed unanimously and will be filed with the Secretary of State.

Hearing no other business before the members, the President entertained a motion to adjourn.

Motion by Larry Rettman. Second by Tom Bik. The motion passed unanimously and the business meeting concluded at 6:48 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Mosczynski, Annual Meeting Secretary

# Treasurer's Report for the Calendar Year 2023

## Metacomet Land Trust, Inc.
## Statement of Financial Position
### As of December 31, 2023

| ASSETS | | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Current Assets | | |
| Bank Accounts | | |
| Unrestricted Operating Funds | $ | 48,453 |
| Temporarily Restricted Funds | | |
| Berthelette Property Fund | $ | 63 |
| Educational Materials Fund | $ | 442 |
| Land Acquisition Fund | $ | 7,915 |
| Mendon Conservation Projects Fund | $ | 6,281 |
| MLT Sign Fund | $ | 5,543 |
| Fee Property Stewardship Fund | $ | 715 |
| Szerlag Farm Property Fund | $ | 787 |
| CR Protection Endowment | $ | 13,378 |
| SNETT Special Projects | $ | 1,137 |
| Lake Manchaug Projects | $ | 3,716 |
| Whitney Trail Upton | $ | 1,593 |
| Bonner Property Fund | $ | 3,607 |
| Robertson Fund for Upton | $ | 450 |
| Rugulieski Woods Fund | $ | 1,000 |
| Total Bank Accounts | $ | 95,081.13 |
| Accounts Receivable | | |
| Lease Fees Receivable | $ | 45 |
| Total Accounts Receivable | $ | 45 |
| Other Current Assets | | |
| CR Stewardship Investment Account | $ | 24,414 |
| Undeposited Funds | $ | 1,054 |
| Prepaid Expenses | $ | 3,289 |
| Total Other Current Assets | $ | 28,757 |
| Total Current Assets | $ | 123,883 |
| Fixed Assets | | |
| Temporarily Restricted Funds | | |
| Permanently Restricted Affordable Lots | $ | 328,807 |
| Permanently Restricted Open Space | $ | 3,045,984 |
| Unrestricted Open Space | $ | 109,100 |
| Total Fixed Assets | $ | 3,483,891 |
| TOTAL ASSETS | $ | 3,607,774 |
| LIABILITIES AND EQUITY | | |
| Liabilities | | |
| Total Liabilities | $ | - |
| Equity | | |
| Unrestricted Assets | $ | 108,806 |
| Retained Earnings | $ | 325,570 |
| Temporarily Restricted | $ | 224,004 |
| Permanently Restricted | $ | 3,208,427 |
| Net Revenue | $ | (105,630) |
| Total Equity | $ | 3,761,177 |
| TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY | $ | 3,761,177 |

Financials are unaudited results for the calendar year 2023

***We Love Where We Live – And We Know You Do, Too!***

## Treasurer's Report for the Calendar Year 2023

As reported last year, in early 2023 MLT made two significant transactions which affected our Balance Sheet. As intended by generous grants to MLT over several years, MLT supported the permanent conservation of the Leland Wild Foundation property in Norfolk with a major grant in January 2023. This grant reduced our Temporarily Restricted cash. Also in January, after Bank of America finally transferred the affordable home at 813 Summer Street in Franklin to the Franklin Housing Authority (FHA), MLT deeded the permanently restricted land under that home to the FHA. The grant and land transfer resulted in a net loss for 2023. MLT's cash position remains strong; we have taken advantage of higher interest rate CDs to help counter inflation.

Some of our operating costs each year are covered by releases from restricted funds for land acquisition and property stewardship. New in 2024 is a fund named the Friends of Maple Farm Sanctuary which will support improvements to the trails at the property once a conservation restriction is completed in the coming months. We gratefully acknowledge the generous founding gifts of Mr. and Mrs. John Gannett of Mendon for this fund. We invite members to support this and other special funds if you have a personal connection to a specific preserve.

Our investment account, designed for long term protection of our CR defense funds, has recovered most of the losses of the past few years. Our Investment Committee continues to monitor the choices made for this fund and may recommend making periodic additions to the investment account from reserves which are currently in low-interest bank accounts.

During 2023, there was no change in the value of our permanently conserved lands because we received no additional donations of land.

As always, Metacomet's charitable returns to the IRS and the Massachusetts Attorney General's office are available upon request.

Susan Speers, Treasurer

May 2024

## Help us continue our conservation work for the next generation!

Have you renewed your membership for 2024? **Membership dues are $25 for a calendar year**. Your dues and donations help us to continue our work of land preservation, conservation, and environmental education.

To join or renew your membership in the land trust, please fill in below and mail to

Metacomet Land Trust, P.O. Box 231, Franklin, MA 02038

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Friend | $ 25.00 | _____ | Forester | $ 250.00 | _____ |
| Steward | $ 50.00 | _____ | Protector | $ 500.00 | _____ |
| Naturalist | $ 100.00 | _____ | Other | | _____ |

I would like to make an additional gift to the Metacomet Land Trust. Please apply my gift towards:

Metacomet Land Preservation Fund _____

NAME(S):_____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE_____ EMAIL:_____

Yes! I am interested in volunteering! _____

Check out our Website: www.MetacometLandTrust.org. You can renew online!

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Muddy Brook South Fern

## Stewardship Report

During 2023, Metacomet Land Trust (MLT) stewardship activities focused on the Szerlag Farm Preserve in Northbridge. The Trust sponsored a "Mitigate the Mustard" event in May where MLT board members and volunteers removed hundreds of garlic mustard plants. Other activities at Szerlag include installation of signage, trail maintenance, and removal of Bradford pear saplings.

At Frankin Woods, MLT board members repaired a trail bridge that was severely damaged by a tree fall.

MLT board members began planning a trail system at the Trust's Manchaug Lake Overlook property in Sutton.

MLT board members visited all properties protected by conservation restrictions (CRs) as part of our yearly monitoring program. The Trust installed signage at the Plymouth Road Conservation Area in Bellingham to help resolve a boundary encroachment. MLT also assisted the owner of a CR-protected property in Uxbridge monitor stream temperature in Cold Spring Brook, a cold-water trout stream that flows through the property.

## Conservation Report

Metacomet and the Town of Mendon are working together to permanently protect 116 acres of open space by adding a conservation restriction to property owned by Jim and Cheri Vandersluis. It will be called the Maple Farm Wildlife Preserve and will protect the property's diverse habitat and continue to allow plant-based farming so agriculture will always be a part of the beautiful landscape. Metacomet applied for and received a $175,000 Conservation Partnership Grant from the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services (DCS) and Mendon's Community Preservation Committee funds will match that to complete the purchase. We thank Jim and Cheri for their generosity and for the wisdom they have shown in protecting their legacy.

Maple Farm in Mendon

Metacomet and the Mendon Conservation Commission will co-hold the conservation restriction and plans for a trail system on the Maple Farm Wildlife Preserve will eventually connect to conservation lands in Hopedale and to other parcels in Mendon. MLT also received a $15,000 donation to establish and maintain this trail system. Watch for ways you can contribute and participate in the enjoyment of this fabulous property in the future!

MLT worked with potential donors and partners on several promising land protection projects in Bellingham, Douglas, Mendon, Northbridge, and Sutton. In Northbridge, the Trust will hold a conservation restriction on the beautiful Castle Hill Farm which was purchased by the town using Community Preservation Act funds in 2023.

Metacomet Land Trust currently owns 652 acres of Conservation Land and holds 12 CRs on another 352 acres. The Trust also monitors a conservation restriction held by the Town of Mendon, co-owns 20 acres in Sutton with the Massachusetts Division of Conservation and Recreation and owns 6 affordable housing lots in Franklin. Properties conserved by Metacomet are located in Bellingham, Blackstone, Franklin, Mendon, Millville, Millbury, Medfield, Northbridge, Norfolk, Sutton, Upton, Uxbridge, and Wrentham.

Grab the best adventure bag at our selected Big Y store during our benefiting month! Every purchase of this reusable $2.50 Community Bag will send our organization a $1 donation.

**NOTICE: Metacomet will get a $1 donation for each of the $2.50 bags pictured here that are bought from the Big Y in Franklin during the month of June. Get a useful bag and help us out!**

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