

Attachment A

A Management Framework for the Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge Agricultural Lease

This attachment is incorporated into the Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge Agricultural Lease. It provides a management framework for the lease; as such, it is intended to provide information, goals, action steps, and other elements to facilitate the coordination and management of the Leased Premises. It is also intended to be somewhat flexible in order to respond to circumstances specific to the agricultural lease at the Park, some of which may develop over time.

Background

“The purpose of the Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge (the "Park") is (1) to preserve the Park lands in their undeveloped state, protecting the scenic vistas, biodiversity, and natural beauty of the Property, and continuing some historic agricultural uses as appropriate, and (2) to provide the residents of Charlotte and the general public with opportunities for aesthetic enjoyment, passive outdoor recreation, and the study of nature.” (*Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Management Plan, June, 1999*)

The Town of Charlotte received a “Proposal for Partnership” dated October 14, 2010 from Clark Hinsdale III, Managing Partner, Nordic Holsteins, LLC, for use of Units A, B, C, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, and the Town of Charlotte Scenic Overlook for agricultural purposes for the development of a “Community Farm” in and around the Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge. The proposal was accepted by the Selectboard on October 25, 2010.

The 1999 Park Management Plan identifies the units identified above as suitable for agriculture, however, specific agricultural practices are recommended in the Plan for different units due to soil type, slope of the land and drainage on the property. In addition, the multiple purposes of the Park require ongoing cooperation between the Town and the farmer(s) using the land to assure protection of natural areas, scenic vistas and trails, and to facilitate coordination of land management activities.

Management Goals

The Town and the Lessee have a mutual goal of developing a plan for the agricultural use of the Leased Premises that incorporates the principles and practices associated with “sustainability.” The development of such a plan will necessitate the Lessee and the Oversight Committee working together during the first year of the lease term, and possibly longer, to identify short and long term goals.

The Oversight Committee and Selectboard recognize that the Lessee has an interest in using the Leased Premises during the period when the above-described plan is being developed.

Therefore, the goals for the first year of the lease for the agricultural use of the Park are:

1. For the Lessee and Oversight Committee to identify: specific short and longer term goals, action steps needed to evaluate and implement the goals, a timeline for the implementation of goals, and assignments of responsibility for evaluating and implementing goals; and
2. Allow agricultural use during the first year of the lease term that does not necessarily implement the vision of sustainable agriculture, but nevertheless, is consistent with the 1999 Park Management Plan.

Potential Short Term Goals and Action Steps:

1. Consult with Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) on the feasibility of transitioning Park land to organic production.
2. Find and designate an appropriate location for the “Honeybee Garden” proposed by Matt Burke (Proposal for agricultural lease at The Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge, October 15, 2010).
3. Delineate riparian buffers (using guidance from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation), hedgerows, field access points and recreational areas—and determine Town’s and/or Lessee’s responsibility for maintaining these areas.
4. Explore options for management of erosion-prone agricultural fields (specifically Units H and I) and identify suitable crops for these fields that are not identified in the Park Management Plan.
5. Identify fence locations and livestock crossing areas between fields.
6. Consider the establishment of a grassland bird area in the Park. This will include exploring eligibility requirements for government funding for agricultural management that benefits wildlife.
7. Explore measures to increase educational opportunities related to the agricultural use of the Park.
8. Develop detailed cropping plans and a nutrient management plan for the Park agricultural units.

Coordination between the Lessee and Town Representatives

The Oversight Committee shall designate a contact person for communications between the Lessee and the Oversight Committee regarding issues of concern and to arrange meetings of the Lessee and the Oversight Committee. Meetings between the Lessee and the Oversight Committee will take place no less than two times per year; however, it is anticipated that there will be ongoing communication between the Oversight Committee and the Lessee in order to coordinate agricultural operations with park management.

As the Oversight Committee and Lessee develop a plan for sustainable agricultural use of the Park, they should jointly inform the Selectboard of the plan, however, the plan does not need formal adoption. Nevertheless, the Oversight Committee and Lessee will keep records of the plan and its implementation, and these records will be consulted when considering renewal of the lease.