



CONSERVATION COMMISSION
ROCKPORT, MASSACHUSETTS
01966

DATE: March 12, 2020

TO: Paul F. Murphy, Chairman
Rockport Board of Selectmen

FROM: David McKinnon, Chairman
Rockport Conservation Commission

CC: Rights of Way Committee
Friends of Andrews Woods

RE: Protection of Andrews Woods Property (Map 15/Lot 92)

At its February 12, 2020 meeting, the Rockport Conservation Commission (the Commission) heard from a group of Rockport residents, known locally as the Friends of Andrews Woods (the Friends) about a parcel of land located between Phillips & Haven Avenues. Their presentation to the Commission included values of wildlife habitat, undisturbed expansive woodland, letters of support in protection from Rockport Rights of Way Committee, Essex County Greenbelt Association, the Cape Ann Trail Stewards, Mass Audubon, MA DCR and the Green Team (to name a few). The Friends have a website (<http://andrewswoods.org/>) which provides details of Andrews Woods, its map, photos, conservation and history. The Friends asked the Commission to inquire of the Board of Selectmen if it would consider transferring the property to it for conservation purposes.

Historically, the property has been enjoyed and valued by resident (not only abutters) who use the woodland trails for recreational purposes. As Rockport plans for resiliency in the face of ongoing climate change, every bit of open space will become increasingly valuable as a carbon sink (mature trees), groundwater recharging areas (unpaved ground surface), and wildlife habitat (undisturbed terrain).

The Commission was formed for open space and natural resource protection within Rockport. In addition, the town created the Rockport Wetlands Protection By-law to protect wildlife habitat as well as recreational values deemed important to the community. One of the many roles of the Commission is to identify key parcels that should be protected and to work for their acquisition and preservation. The Commission has heard from resident in town in support of protecting this property. Statistics presented in the 2019 Open Space & Recreation Plan for the Town of Rockport indicate that 76% of the survey respondents indicated that protection of wetlands and wildlife habitat is a top priority.

The Friends have been maintaining trails and the woods in general for years and would like to be the stewards of the land. They find it refreshing and community building to be a part of the area's maintenance.

The Rockport Conservation Commission therefore requests that the Board of Selectmen strongly consider transferring the property known as Andrews Woods on Map 15/Lot 92 to the Commission for conservation purposes.

Please inform the Commission when this topic will be on a Board of Selectmen meeting agenda.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.