

For additional information about the
Community Preservation Act statewide,
visit the Community Preservation Coalition
website at www.communitypreservation.org



Make a difference!



Help preserve Boxborough's undeveloped land for conservation, forestry, agriculture, and recreation by sending a tax deductible contribution to BCTrust, 650 Massachusetts Avenue, Boxborough, MA 01719. Every donation is greatly appreciated. Learn more at our website, www.bctrust.org, or send an email to the president at president@bctrust.org.

BCTrust announces annual contest winners!

Every year the Boxborough Conservation Trust sponsors a writing contest and an art contest at Blanchard Memorial School to encourage students to think about the natural landscapes and wildlife in their community. The writing contest, now in its 12th year, featured entries from Grade 6. The design contest, in its 16th year, is for 4th-grade students. See inside this issue for the names of all winners, runners-up, and honorable mentions, plus reprints of the top writing and art entries.



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Common Ground

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Preserving and Protecting Boxborough's Undeveloped Land

The Community Preservation Act: One Town's Experience

By Bradford Gray

At Annual Town Meeting on May 13th, Boxborough became the 156th community in Massachusetts to adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA). This wise decision on the part of the voters will be of great benefit to the town's future. By levying a 1% surcharge on annual property taxes, Boxborough will finally be eligible to receive matching state funds for three qualified purposes:

- **Historic Resources**, including restoring historic structures, such as Boxborough's Town Hall and Steele Farm's house and barn; and preserving historic artifacts, such as records, monuments, stone walls, and cemetery headstones.
- **Community Housing**, including creating affordable housing for families, seniors, young people, and veterans. CPA funds can be used to help make progress towards reaching Boxborough's 10% affordable housing goal (currently at only 1.2%), thereby gaining important control over the development of future affordable housing projects under Chapter 40B. Under the law, developers are allowed to build more densely than local municipal zoning bylaws would permit in any municipality where less than 10% of its housing qualifies as affordable.
- **Outdoor Recreation and Open Space**, including creating or improving playing fields, playgrounds, walking paths, and tennis and basketball courts; preserving agricultural land; protecting water resources; and conserving open land, forests, and fields for public benefit.

In his most informative presentation on April 6th, following the BC Trust's Annual Meeting, Bob Wilber, former Chair

of the Town of Stow's Community Preservation Committee, talked about his town's experience with CPA. Bob prefaced his remarks by saying that he was not there "to sell anyone anything" but "more as a neighbor," interested in sharing the story of Stow's success with CPA.

Stow got on board with CPA early on, in 2001, and has never regretted its decision. Since adopting it, the town has received over \$3.3 million in matching state funds. "This is one of the best deals out there," Bob said, "but many people simply don't realize it." Although the state's matching funds rate has var-

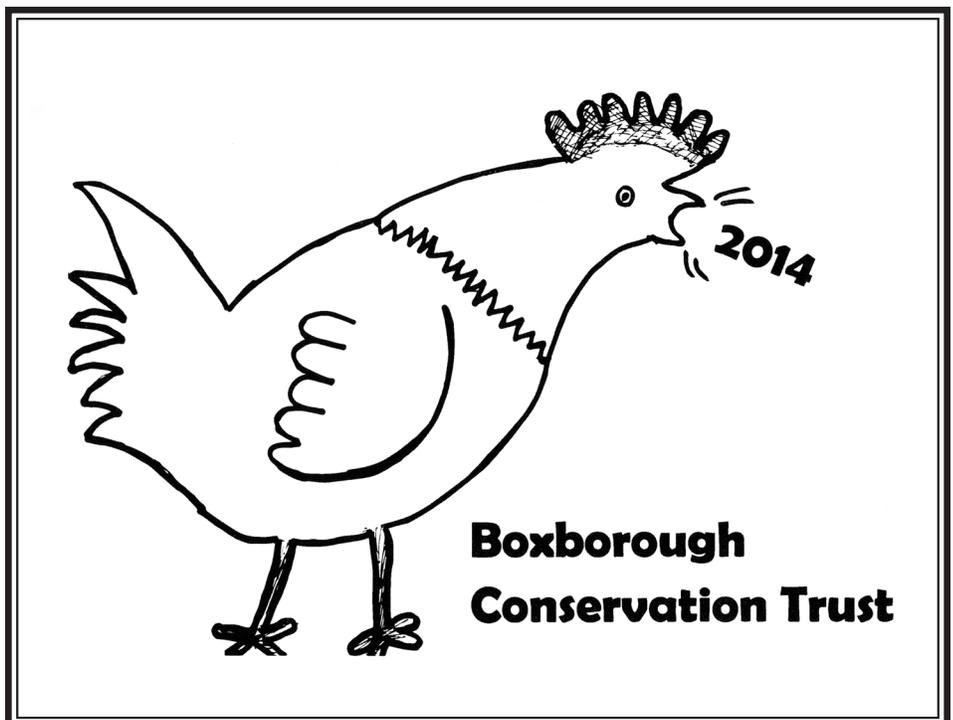
ied from 100% before the economic downturn in 2008 to a low of 27% (last year's rate was 52%), Bob believes that Stow's decision to adopt CPA was really a "no-brainer." "It's like participating in a company 401(k) plan," he said. "Where else can you get this kind of return on your investment, even at 27%?"

Over the years, the \$3.3 million in state funds has allowed Stow to take on some very worthwhile projects in each of the three qualified areas. Some of these were relatively small-scale projects (e.g., the restoration of various historic land-

(continued on next page)

BCTrust 2014 Art Contest

Jack Lehouck, Winner



See inside for all of BCTrust's 2014 Writing and Art Contest winners!

CPA: Stow's Experience

(continued from front page)

marks) that, without the CPA state match, the town might have continued to put off indefinitely because they were not high priorities. Others were larger undertakings that the town simply could not have afforded, at least not without borrowing large sums of money. A good example of the latter is Stow Community Park. Occupying seven acres of land purchased by the town, and built at a cost of approximately \$1 million by the same company that constructed Gillette Stadium, this attractively landscaped facility boasts outdoor tennis and basketball courts, two baseball diamonds, a picnic area and a bandstand pavilion. It serves as a center for outdoor community activities, such as Stow's annual Spring Fest event which took place there last month. If Stow had borrowed the money to build the park, Bob said, the cost to the town, with financing, would have been approximately \$1.3 million. As it was, the total cost to the town was approximately \$500,000, since \$500,000 came from matching state funds and there were no financing costs.

One of the attractions of CPA is that the town (i.e., the voters at Town Meeting), not the state, controls how funds raised locally via the property tax surcharge, plus the matching state funds, are spent. The only restriction is that a minimum of 10% must be allocated annually (either expended or reserved) to each of the three qualified areas; the remaining 70% may be spent at the town's discretion, or set aside for future use, subject to voter approval. Since adopting CPA in 2001, Stow's Community Preservation Fund has generated \$7,907,038 in new funding (\$4,543,767 from the local property tax surcharge plus interest and \$3,363,271 in matching funds) to spend on various projects important to the town in each of the three areas.

Bob Wilber—and apparently a majority of Stow voters—feels that these expenditures have had, and will continue to have, a very positive impact on the town. Without CPA funding, many of the initiatives

mentioned in the box below simply would not, or could not, have taken place, while others would have been implemented at a significantly lower level of overall quality.

Before Boxborough voted to adopt CPA, it was argued by some that the town did not have enough upcoming projects to justify levying the property tax surcharge (the matching state funds notwithstanding). However, beyond allocating 10% annually for each of the three qualified purposes, there is no time limit for spending the matching funds. In fact, Bob recommended “going easy on the spending” during the early stages in order to build a nest egg that would enable the town to pursue the most compelling future opportunities, without limitations of insufficient funds.

As Stow's experience with CPA clearly demonstrates, with proper planning and adequate funding, a great deal could be accomplished in Boxborough to ensure the quality of life we enjoy now and to preserve and improve it for future generations.

Highlights of some of Stow's CPA expenditures

Open Space and Recreation

- Acquired seven acres of land to create and develop recreation fields and facilities (Stow Community Park) at 60 Old Bolton Road.
- Purchased a Conservation Restriction for 23 acres of land (the Hale Woodlands) off of Maple Street that will keep the land open space permanently.
- Purchased an Agricultural Restriction on 18.6 acres of farmland off of Maple Street.
- Purchased a permanent Conservation Restriction on 30.3 acres of land for open space preservation and passive recreation.
- Purchased an easement 9,900 feet in length along the former railroad roadbed between Sudbury Road and White Pond Road, formerly owned by the Boston & Maine Railroad. This land is suitable for the construction of a portion of the Assabet River Rail Trail and for public access.
- Transferred CPA funds to the Conservation Commission's Conservation Fund for future land acquisitions. \$21,500 of these funds were used towards an Agricultural Preservation Restriction on the Tyler Parcel.

Historic Resources

- Allocated \$20,000 in CPA funds for construction of public access improvements to the Old West School, a historic (1825) one-room schoolhouse located on Harvard Road.
- Appropriated funds for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of historic stone walls and the restoration of headstones and monuments at the Brookside and Hillside Cemeteries, along Pompositticut Road, and along Route 117 at the Lower Village Cemetery.
- Updated Stow's Historic Property Inventory and undertook preservation and restoration of permanent town historic documents.
- Allocated \$929 in CPA funds to repair the Old Blacksmith Shop located on the Central School grounds.

Community Housing

- Used \$350,000 in CPA funds to permanently preserve the affordability restrictions that were at risk of expiring on 37 apartments at Pilot Grove Apartments.
- Appropriated \$150,000 in CPA funds to acquire permanent affordable housing deed restrictions from owners of existing homes in Stow, thereby ensuring that they remain affordable in perpetuity. The deed restrictions require that when the owner sells the home, the sale price will be limited to the maximum affordable purchase price for a low- or moderate-income homebuyer, based on HUD income limits in effect at the time. This approach has enabled Stow to create additional affordable housing without the increased capital investment of acquiring the property itself.

Annual Blanchard Memorial Contest Winners

By Tara Zantow

Global Warming is on everyone's mind, and today's youth want to do their part to reduce the warming trend, so the BCTrust asked students to write a persuasive essay, poem, or narrative to convince townspeople to make preserving undeveloped land, especially trees, a priority. See what our four winners had to say about how trees not only remove carbon from the atmosphere, but also benefit us in countless other ways—from providing habitat for wildlife to creating fantastic views for all to enjoy. We would also like to recognize Sophia Pasalis, Michael Pierce, and Emma Russo for honorable mentions.

Our thanks go to the sixth-grade teachers, especially Ms. Nancy Melbourne who has helped to coordinate the contest for the past few years, Dr. Curtis Bates for his support throughout his tenure, and to all the students who submitted entries this year. Winners were selected by a blind review process by our three judges: Mr. Hugh Fortmiller, Ms. Lynn Stahlberg, and Ms. Tara Zantow.



Back row (left to right): Writing Contest winners Sydney Antes (3rd place), Sayoni Barari (2nd place), Amber Li (1st place-tie), and Jillian McCarthy (1st place-tie). Front Row: Art Contest winners John Lung (runner-up), Jack Lehouck (winner), and Dalton Luce (runner-up).



Save Open Land by Jillian McCarthy, Grade 6

Open land is beneficial to us in many ways. One benefit of preserving the land is that it preserves trees. Trees have an important impact on all of our lives. They take out carbon dioxide (CO²) that we breathe out and give back oxygen that we breathe in. This is so important because too much CO² in the air is one of the main causes of climate change. More trees mean less CO². Less CO² means less climate change.

There are also economic benefits to land preservation. Some towns think it is an expense. But it is actually proven to be an investment. What tourists want is some place with natural beauty. Wherever the tourists go is where business goes, which is very good for the town. So more open land is better because it has natural beauty. Also, homes sell for 10-20% more with nature parks nearby. Another benefit is that it protects clean water so you don't need as many water treatment facilities.

Nature trails are also a benefit to us all. They are a great way to go and enjoy the outdoors with your family. You can bike, hike or you can just stroll through the trails. This all wouldn't be possible without land preservation. With habitat loss and climate change, we might not be able to see the beautiful creatures we love. So if you want to see the beautiful animals then make an effort to preserve the open land.

Q&A with Scarlett the Oak by Amber Li, Grade 6

Q: Welcome Scarlett! Please introduce yourself.

A: Hello everybody! As you probably know, I'm Scarlett the Oak, part-time actor, part-time director, full-time talkin' tree.

Q: So I think everybody wants to know when your movie, "You've Got a Tree in Me" is coming out.

A: I was planning to premiere it in the next few months, but with all the relocating and such, I decided to hold back production.

Q: How are you and your family?

A: Unfortunately, someone wanted to build some condominiums where we used to live, and once I heard the news, I had to rush out to bring my family and the rest of the community to safety. Others weren't so lucky, and have now turned into gas station towels and Harry Potter books.

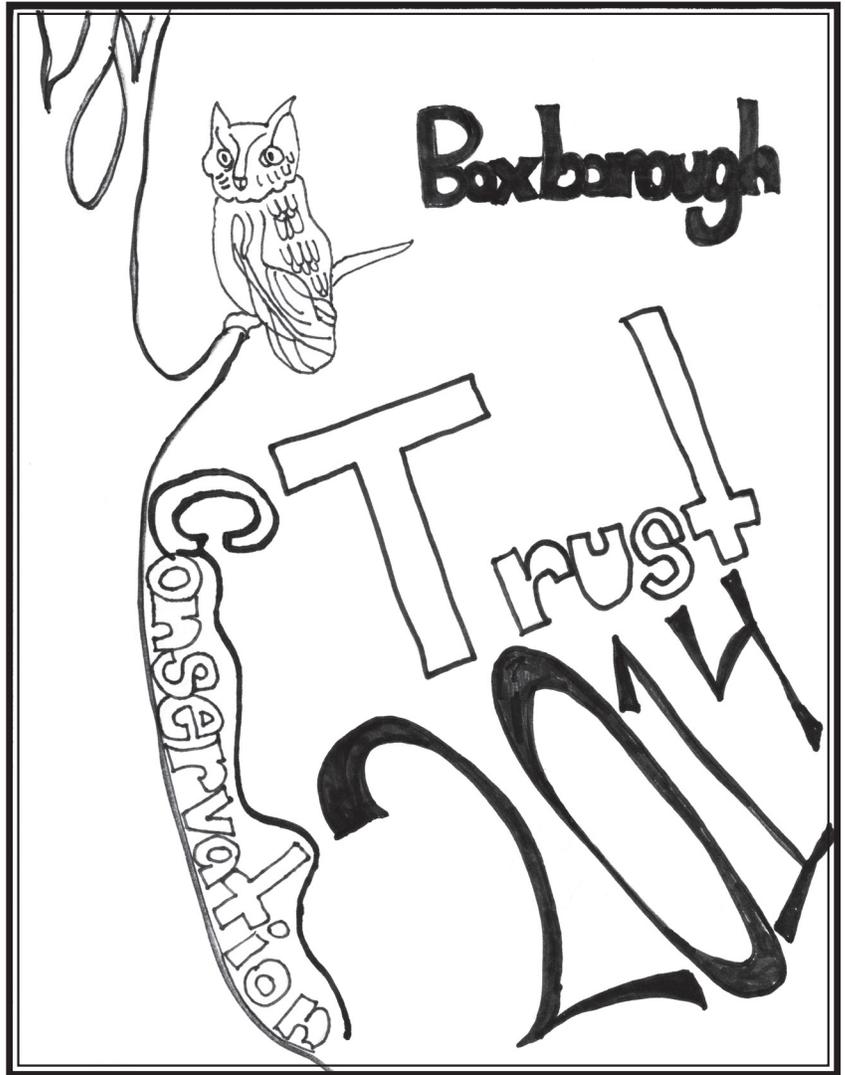
Q: How do you feel about conserving land such as the plot you used to live on?

A: I would like to bring an awareness that we trees are not just giant placeholders. We help rid Carbon Dioxide in the air; without us, you probably would be living on a burning planet. We keep habitats alive with the shade and protection we give to animals. And just look at us! We're GORGEOUS! Who would want to cut us down when we are such regal plants? Not to mention, my ancestors have probably lived through more years than yours did, so when you cut us down, you're cutting down a little piece of history too.

Q: What are your final words?

A: Trees have feelings too!

John Lung, Runner-up



Eyes of a Tree

by Sayoni Barari, Grade 6

Many months
 Have come and gone
 In a silent glade
 Under the elder's shade
 Away from prying eyes
 Tucked away from harm
 I grew



A hundred years
 Passed by
 Hushed whispers
 Rustle my leaves
 Bare feet come running
 Bare hands hug my branches
 Once I was small
 But now I am tall

Two hundred years
 Flew past on the wing of the wind
 Bustling nests rest on my shoulder
 I can hear their calls and cries
 Those hands and feet
 Are big and smart now

Three hundred years
 Went away
 One day
 The melody of the birds faded
 Replaced by a cracking sound
 Throughout the woods
 Until
 Thump
 My friend lays dead
 Beside my roots

Four hundred years
 Have come
 What once was a quiet home
 Is now an empty wasteland
 I hear no sounds of birds
 My friends
 They all fell one by one

Five hundred years
 Slipped by
 I long for the sound of birds
 For days when hands climbed up my bough
 When laughter rang through the woods
 Everything was beautiful

Six hundred years
 Came by
 For the first time
 In many years
 I hear the sound of footsteps
 Gentle hands dig into the soil
 They place a small object into a hole
 A seed

Seven hundred years
 Move past
 The seeds beneath the soil
 Push through the blanket of dirt
 Then slowly reach the sky
 Fragile sprouts
 Grow into strong trunks

Eight hundred years
 Skip by
 What once was a desolate wasteland
 Is now a lush forest
 Yet I still long for the song of my early days
 Until
 I hear
 The gentle
 Chorus of
 Chirps

Letter to the Editor
 by Sydney Antes, Grade 6



Dear BCTrust:

I may only be 12 years old, but I do understand what is happening in the world all around us; and trust me, we appreciate what the BCTrust has done to help preserve the land all around Boxborough. We have seen the world outside on our own, and don't want this to happen where we live. This open land gives us benefits that other towns do not have. We have clean water, fresh air, and a great natural habitat for animals to live in. This open land, that other communities do not have, gives us more knowledge about nature. With the help of the BCTrust, animals can prosper, people and animals have safe, clean water, plants and trees grow rapidly to create a lush forest, and the air has less CO², which can lead to global warming. Many people don't take helping into consideration, but if you could preserve a spot of land, plant a few trees, and take good care of our land, it would be a huge help to go in the opposite direction of global warming or any other harmful thing that could happen to our planet. Let's make a change together!

Letter from the President

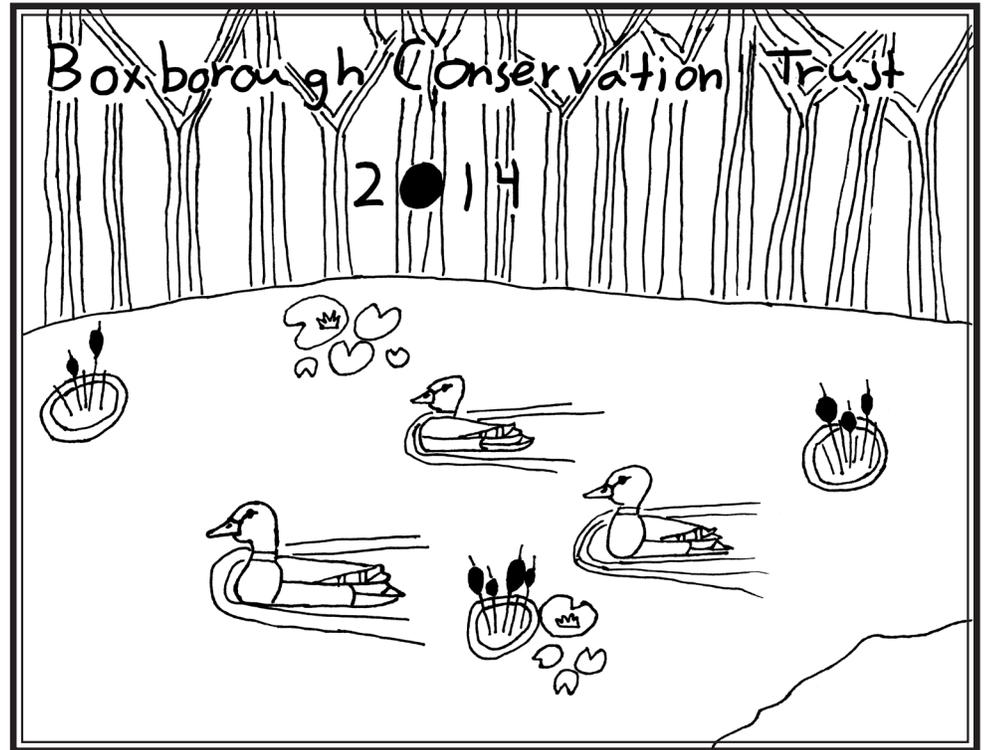
By Rita Gibes Grossman

2014 Art Contest

Dalton Luce, Runner-up

In early January, the BCTrust closed the deal on seven acres of the 35-acre Campbell land parcel on Depot Road. With the proceeds from the sale of these four house lots to a local developer, the BCTrust will almost be able to pay off the loan used to acquire the parcel in 2009. When the due diligence for the permanent protection of the remaining acres is completed, the BCTrust will begin working on hiking trails on the property. The conserved parcel will preserve habitat for wildlife, wetlands, water resources, and public access.

Bob Wilber did an excellent job demystifying the Community Preservation Act (CPA) at the BCTrust's annual meeting in April. At Annual Town Meeting in May, CPA passed with an 88% yes vote. In addition to housing and historic needs, the town definitely has a variety of undeveloped land in private ownership that it will desire to see preserved



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in the future, whether for farming, recreation, habitat, or water resource protection. The town will be greatly helped by having CPA; however, in addition to the Town Meeting vote, CPA must be voted in on the November 4th ballot.

In April, the BCTrust hosted and co-sponsored with the land trusts from Harvard, Acton, Littleton, and our regional land trust, Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT), a conservation seminar specifically for land owners from our respective towns. Speaking to a full crowd, four experts spoke on: conservation options (Christa Collins, Land Protection Specialist, SVT); the appraisal process (Jonathan Avery, Appraiser, Avery and Associates); and legal issues, tax benefits, and the process for obtaining conservation restrictions (George Dresser, Attorney, Dresser & McGourthy, LLP). Jonathan Panek, a former Boxborough resident, gave a most compelling presentation on the benefits he and his wife

experienced as conservation-minded landowners who sold their land *well below market rate* to the Town of Boxborough as part of the Patch Hill conservation land acquisition.

Thank you to all the members who continue to support this organization with your donations. Your membership dollars enable the Trust's work. Another "work enabler," without which the Trust cannot exist, is volunteer time. If you have an interest and the skills to assist with program planning and coordination, please contact us.

In Appreciation: Thank you to Jessica Eichelburg for her years of coordinating the Art Design Contest at the Blanchard Memorial Elementary School, and welcome and thank you to Pam Fleming, who transitioned into Jessica's position this year. Also, best of luck to Tammy McFadden with her move and for her past assistance with this publication.