

Becket Land Trust

Annual Meeting Minutes

October 15, 2005

Becket Town Hall

Quorum was reached and the 14th Annual Becket Land Trust Annual Meeting came to order at 10:20 AM. Ken Smith, President, introduced the Board members present, identified the board members who were unable to attend, and welcomed the membership.

1. President's State of the Trust: Ken Smith said that the BLT accomplished a great deal this year. We completed the Historic Quarry Walk project, installing the granite posts with explanatory signage. Derrick restoration work continued. The parking area was beautified by the Becket Boy Scouts, under the leadership of Jared DeFoe of McNerney Road, as part of his Eagle Scout project. Many people turned out for Quarry Celebration Day and the dedication of the Quarry Gateway, in special thanks for the generosity and support of the late John Guachione. The BLT has rented office and permanent exhibit space in the historic Mullen House in Becket Village. This summer the BLT had a show containing quarry artifacts and videos from our oral history collection. The Mullen House Education Center, a separate non-profit organization, has received grants of \$75,000 for renovation work at the Mullen House. The BLT looks forward to the completion of the renovation work. A benefit of the BLT using the Mullen House is getting to share space and information with its co-tenant, The Nature Conservancy. The BLT will be reviewing its by-laws over the coming year to see if they need updating or clarifying, since they were written 15 years ago.
2. Treasurer's Report: Allan Metrick, Treasurer, stated that, in summary, the BLT has a piece of property and about \$14,000 in the bank. In the past year we spent \$24,000 on trails construction and signs. Grants covered about 2/3 of the cost. The rest came from the BLT reserves. The trust is now at the point where our expenses are going up more than what we collect from our members in their annual donations. Grants generally can not be used to fund ongoing trail maintenance or general operating expenses. We estimate that our annual expenses are about \$10,000 year, which includes trail maintenance, insurance, printings and mailings. Our members have contributed approximately \$7,500 per year. Grants received this year paid for the cost of having signs for the Quarry Walk and the hiking trails fabricated, but did not cover the cost of installing the signs. The BLT board voted to expend money from our general fund to cover the installation, and we hope to replenish our bank account

through increased membership contributions. We are now at the fiscal point where we will not make new major expenditures, without getting funding first.

3. Membership: The Board has determined that there is some confusion about what makes someone a member of the Becket Land Trust. Some people have thought that since they made an initial donation to purchase the quarry property in late 1999 through 2000, that they should be members for life and that they did not need to make annual contributions. We are extremely grateful to past contributors, but we need continued financial support. Our by-laws state that a member is someone who has paid annual membership dues. What we collect from our members that allows us to continue our progress. The Board has decided that we will have an annual membership appeal that will take place at the end of the year. A donation in any amount will make you a member for the year, but we hope that members will give as generously as they are able. The board has decided that for the time being we are going to discontinue sending out membership premiums, but we will make the Becket Land Trust hats available for purchase. We need to find a way to have the many non-members who use the quarry become members and help support us financially.

4. Report from the Vice-President (Neil Toomey)
Forestry Plan: Neil Toomey summarized our Forest Management Plan. Currently our forest is not as healthy as we would like. The past tree cutting practices that had been done before we became the owners took the healthy diverse trees and left primarily diseased or low grade trees. The board hired a wildlife biologist to study our forest and make recommendations as to how we can improve the health of our forest and benefit the wildlife that lives in it. She came up with an extensive report on the existing conditions and made many recommendations which we are trying to implement. The wildlife report is available at our website. www.becketlandtrust.org. Recommendations include doing some patch cutting of trees to allow more diversified growth and regeneration of healthy species. A more diversified forest will promote more wildlife diversity. Most of the cutting that will be done will take place during the winter. It is extremely important that we educate visitors about what we are doing and why. We will have detailed signs along the hiking trails, in the areas where cutting is going on. We do not want people to think we are destroying their forest. We do have some old growth trees in the Cushman Brook area, but we do not have any stands of old-growth trees. None of the old-growth trees will be cut.

Trails: Our hiking trails are complete and we have installed all the hiking trail signs. Phase One of the historic Quarry Walk was also completed.

Derrick Restoration: Restoration work on the wooden derrick continues with the help of many devoted and dedicated volunteers. We have begun running the

cable to the top of the derrick and winding the cables onto the winch. Neil is pleased that a group of younger (and stronger?) volunteers are now helping with the very physically demanding work.

Pink Granite Quarry: The land trust has been approached by the owners of the pink granite quarry located off of Route 20. The property had been owned by Leslie Mitchell, and now his heirs are putting the property up for sale, but would like the Becket Land Trust to get the portion which contains the quarry and the rail-grades. The BLT needs to raise \$45,000 to purchase the property. The property contains many historic quarrying artifacts. Our plans for the property, if we are able to purchase it, include making this a handicapped accessible part of our outdoor quarry museum. We would have a geology exhibit explaining the about different types of granite found in the area.

5. Museum Report: Dorothy Napp Schindel, our Museum Director, described all that has been accomplished this year. We are very pleased that we have completed the Quarry Walks self-guided tour. The Quarry brochure has met with rave reviews. The BLT has joined the Berkshire Visitors' Bureau, and the press coverage of the Quarry has been terrific. Please go to our web site at www.becketlandtrust.org to see fabulous pictures, maps, descriptions and more. We set up exhibits at the Mullen House this summer. Our oral history project continues. We are developing programs we hope to get funding for. They include bringing school children studying local history on field trips to the exhibit at the Mullen House or to the quarry, developing a lecture series and producing a historical theater production.

6. Election of Board of Directors: The Board of Directors terms are for one year. The following were nominated and seconded to be on the Board:

Eve Cholmar	Leo Seligson
Sid Cholmar	Alice Shabecoff
Gil Falcone	Philip Shabecoff
Gerry Goldman	Ann Connell Smith
Sharon Hughes	Kenneth Smith
Barbara Mandler	Neil Toomey
Allan Metrick	Waino Tuomenin
Jonathan Nix	Dan Woiski
Dorothy Knapp Schindel	Gretchen Woiski
Stephen Schindel	
Marty Schlanger	

All were unanimously elected. At the first meeting of the Board after the annual meeting, the officers will be chosen by the Board.

Meeting Adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Connell Smith
Becket Land Trust Secretary