

***DRAFT (3/30/2017) – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION***

**EAST MONTPELIER CONSERVATION FUND**

**APPLICATION PACKET**

Dear Applicant:

Attached you will find documents related to the East Montpelier Conservation Fund (“the Fund”), including its purpose and goals, allowed uses, selection process, and the application form.

Please read these documents carefully and make sure to fill out the application form completely, referencing the guiding documents in this packet. Also, please provide a map of the property which locates the site within the town and its relation to surrounding properties. The Conservation Fund Advisory Committee (“the Committee”) will arrange to meet with you and other involved parties to discuss your application and answer questions you may have regarding this process. The Committee may also request a site visit.

Questions may be directed to the Chair of the Committee.

Applications may be submitted to:

Bruce Johnson, Town Administrator  
Town of East Montpelier  
40 Kelton Road  
PO Box 157  
East Montpelier, VT 05651

or: eastmontadmin@comcast.net

Thank you for your interest in protecting the rural character of East Montpelier.

Sincerely,

Conservation Fund Advisory Committee:

Ginny Callan  
Natalie Chapell  
Art Chickering  
Bruce Howlett  
Charles Johnson, Chair  
Brian Lusignan

Revised: March 30, 2017

## EAST MONTPELIER CONSERVATION FUND

### Purpose of the Fund:

To work with willing landowners, non-profit organizations, land trusts, and government agencies to conserve East Montpelier valued natural resources: land, wetlands, and waters for agricultural, forest, wildlife, scenic, and recreational use, and to protect important natural areas. ~~The fund will be used when other funding is not available and/or when providing funding is in the best interest of the town.~~ **Delete the last sentence. It is unnecessary and not a “purpose.” Using the Fund when “other funding is not available” could deplete it very quickly; leveraging other money is much more cost-effective. Also, surely we always act in the “best interests of the town.”**

### Goals:

- (1) Maintain the rural, working, land-based character of East Montpelier through:
  - (a) conserving important agricultural lands integral to sustainable farming, now and in the future.
  - (b) conserving important productive, and sustainably-managed forest lands.
  - (c) assisting development of a new farm or forestry business.
  - (d) facilitating intergeneration transfer of an ongoing farm or forestry business.
- (2) Enhance the network of multipurpose recreational trails and recreational access to lands and waters on conserved properties.
- (3) Preserve terrestrial, wetland, and aquatic areas of high ecological and public value, by:
  - (a) Preserving biological diversity, including sites of rare, threatened, or endangered species and natural communities.
  - (b) Maintaining and improving habitat connectivity, including wildlife travel corridors, unbroken forest blocks, etc.
  - (c) Sustaining other important and uncommon habitats, such as deer wintering areas, vernal pools, and bogs.
- (4) Avoid excessive increases in public service costs for town residents.
- (5) Ensure that conserved lands and their values are consistent with the Town Plan.

- (6) ~~When appropriate, allow for future development. Delete. We do not know how to do this, have no guidelines, and it is not within our scope of work. Rather, this is within the purview of the Planning Commission and Selectboard.~~

### **Eligibility for Application to the Fund:**

Any East Montpelier landowner or official landowner representative is eligible to submit an application.

### **Allowed Uses of the Fund:**

The Fund will be used primarily to augment or leverage other public and/or private funds on projects deemed important in achieving the Goals above.

The Fund may contribute to, but not be limited to: fee-simple purchase of property or interests in property, conservation easements (purchase of development rights, that is, removing development potential), rights of first refusal (first option to buy), options to purchase at agricultural or forestry value, long term leases, and bargain sales. Funds may also be used for site work, appraisals, and surveys with the understanding that such funds will be reimbursable to the Fund if conservation is not achieved.

### **Role of the Committee:**

The Committee works only with willing landowners or their representatives. It reviews and evaluates each application, and makes a decision on whether to accept, reject, or modify the proposal. It makes its recommendation to the Selectboard. The Selectboard may accept, reject, or modify the recommendation of the Committee, based on other considerations.

The Committee may also engage with private non-profit land trusts, and local, state, and federal government agencies working with the landowners. Typically, it will recommend that the Fund be used to supplement funding provided by State and Federal agencies and administered by private non-profits or land trusts.

The Committee will consider soils data from USDA-NRCS, habitat and species distribution information from VT Agency of Natural Resources, the East Montpelier Town Plan, project evaluations by the Vermont Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, or other recognized authorities, or any other relevant information or interpretations. Both the Committee and applicants may seek assistance and support for their work from these and other organizations.

The Committee cannot own land or interests in land; such authority resides with the Selectboard on behalf of the town.

The Committee gives consideration to the following issues in evaluating proposals:

- (1) Effectiveness of a proposed project in achieving the town's conservation goals.
- (2) Relative importance of the proposal for agriculture, forest, wildlife, scenic, recreational or natural area use, according to available evaluation systems (see above).
- (3) Impact of proposed project on adjacent land.
- (4) Cost effectiveness: how much money can be leveraged from other funding sources.
- (5) Preservation of important natural resources and biological diversity in town.
- (6) Threat from conversion to other uses that could negatively affect conservation values.  
*Changed wording as we have no guidelines or means to determine what is or is not "beneficial to the town," nor is it within our field of expertise.*
- (7) Cost of the proposal relative to the funds available in the Fund.
- (8) Compatibility with the Town Plan.

### **Evaluation & Selection Process:**

- (1) An application must be on the '**Request for Funds**' form in this packet, available at the East Montpelier Town Office or online at the town's website (<http://eastmontpeliervt.org>). The completed application must be sent to the Town Administrator, for distribution to the Committee. The application must address the criteria in this document.
- (2) The Town Administrator will provide the Committee and the Planning Commission with all application materials. The Planning Commission will review the application for conformance with the Town Plan and forward its comments to the Committee prior to its evaluation and recommendation. *This entire section has been rewritten to make the separate roles clear and emphasize that we are advisory only to the Selectboard.*
- (3) The Committee will meet as needed to review applications, following required public warning. Subsequent meetings with the landowner and/or representative may follow. A quorum is needed to vote for a decision on an application.
- (4) The Committee will make its recommendation and forward it to the Selectboard. The Selectboard may request a meeting with the Committee, Planning Commission, and/or applicant to answer questions or for follow-up discussion.
- (5) The Selectboard will make a decision on each proposal, to accept, deny, or modify the Committee's recommendation. It alone has the authority to expend money from the Fund.

**EAST MONTPELIER CONSERVATION FUND**

**REQUEST FOR FUNDS**

Owner's Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's Name (if different from owner): \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please answer the following as completely as possible. Attach additional sheets, if necessary.**

Location of Land under consideration: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Zoning District: \_\_\_\_\_ Size of parcel: \_\_\_\_\_ Is it part of a larger parcel? \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Outline your request, including dollar amounts and type of funding required, with reference to the criteria in the packet documents): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Benefit(s) of project to East Montpelier: \_\_\_\_\_

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Current use(s) of the land: \_\_\_\_\_

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Current restriction(s) on the land, if any: \_\_\_\_\_

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What funding options have been explored? Indicate dollar amounts: \_\_\_\_\_

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If agricultural land, has it been evaluated through available standard criteria: \_\_\_\_\_

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Is this land mentioned in any other land study? Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

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What will insure that the property will remain in the use proposed? \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of owner/official representative: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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**East Montpelier Conservation Fund Advisory Committee Actions:**

Date received: \_\_\_\_\_

Action taken: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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**East Montpelier Selectboard Actions:**

Date received: \_\_\_\_\_

Action taken: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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