

Jim & Carol Baum Donate Conservation Area

Hanover Selectboard votes to accept donation of 238-acre conservation area

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Published: 6/27/2023 11:55:52 PM

Modified: 6/27/2023 11:55:54 PM

HANOVER — Town officials are in the process of reacquiring a conservation area on the eastern side of Moose Mountain currently used for public recreation and education.

The Baum Foundation, founded by Hanover residents Jim and Carol Baum, are donating three parcels of conservation area totaling 238 acres to the town Conservation Commission, along with \$50,000 to cover maintenance costs.

On Monday the Selectboard voted unanimously to authorize the Conservation Commission to accept the land and monetary donation.

“This is wonderful,” Selectboard Chairman Athos Rassias said at Monday’s meeting. “It’s an amazing property, and the town is forever appreciative.”

The conservation area comprises three parcels of land and improvements that include a parking lot, more than 3 miles of hiking trails and a cabin that was donated to the Dartmouth Outing Club in 2008.

The trails — which are designed for “confident hikers with good trail skills” — provide an optional connection to the Ridge Trail, a former snowmobile passage that takes hikers to the top of the eastern ridge of Moose Mountain.

Jim and Carol Baum purchased the parcels in 2005 from the town and gave the town a conservation easement to the land.

Planning and Zoning Director Rob Houseman said the town wanted to turn the property over to “angel investors” who would maintain and protect the land for public use.

The Baums built the existing parking lot and worked with the Upper Valley Trails Alliance to improve the trails, according to the Hanover Conservancy, a private, nonprofit land trust.

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The Baum family is donating the land back to the town following the passing of Jim Baum on April 6 at the age of 85.

Houseman said Baum family representatives reached out last August to seek the town's interest in reacquiring the land.

Jim and Carol Baum were both Dartmouth College alumni who moved back to Hanover in 2014 from Morris, Ill. Jim Baum's obituary, published in the Morris Daily Herald, noted that the Baums contributed to "numerous conservation initiatives in New Hampshire," including the Moosilauke Ravine Lodge, a Dartmouth College-owned ski lodge in Warren, N.H.

Julianne Buck, executive director of the Community Foundation of Grundy County — a philanthropic organization in Illinois founded by Jim Baum — wrote in a 2017 newsletter that the Baums sought to preserve the conservation area's public access as well as its natural resources.

"We are grateful for all the Baums' work in protecting this property over the years," Houseman said. "We now have the opportunity to preserve this land in the Baum family name and to hold it in perpetuity and in their honor."

The Conservation Commission will need to schedule a public hearing to consider accepting the land and monetary donation. The commission's next meeting is July 12 at 7 p.m. in the Town Hall boardroom.

Houseman said the \$50,000 will be placed in an investment account to generate revenues to ensure the long-term upkeep of the property, including mowing and parking lot maintenance. He said the annual costs are approximately \$2,000 to \$3,000, with most of the maintenance performed by volunteers.

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