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To: Colchester Planning Commission
From: Marty Gillies, Planning & Zoning Intern
Re: Buyout Funding Sources
Date: June 13, 2019

The wastewater treatment system that is presently being considered by the Colchester Planning Commission is a buyout, in which the town would purchase and demolish a number of structures in the high-risk region of the Inner bay neighborhood. While the exact scope of this buyout has not yet been defined, it is estimated that it would cost tens of millions of dollars for the town to acquire these properties. The Town does not presently have the capital available to execute a buyout of this magnitude alone, so some exploratory research was conducted to come up with possible sources of financial assistance. The research identified fifteen organizations with histories of local land acquisition as potential Town partners for the buyout which were then further evaluated according to a variety of relevant criteria such as funds available, alignment of organizational mission with goals of town buyout, and others. At the conclusion of this evaluation process each of the organizations was determined to be either likely or unlikely to provide funding for the buyout.

Summary of Evaluation: Ten of these organizations can be categorized as land conservation groups, while the other five have a focus on supporting projects that actively preserve environmental health. Although there would certainly be ecological benefits and elements of land conservation involved in a Town buyout of the properties along Lakeshore Drive, it may be hard to frame this project as anything other than a local public health intervention, and after perusing each organization's body of work and consulting their mission statements, it appears that most of them have relatively minimal interest in public health issues. Nearly all of the conservation groups are primarily interested in purchasing pristine natural areas and protecting them from development, while most of the other groups are primarily interested in supporting scientific research projects, specifically regarding lake and tributary health.

Since the buyout would be of already-developed land and involve minimal scientific research, it is unlikely that any of the identified organizations would have the interest or the funds to assist with the project. Furthermore, for public relations reasons, it is unlikely that any of these organizations would want to be involved in a potentially hostile eminent domain situation in the event that not all of the buyouts are voluntary. In conclusion, it is highly improbable that the Town of Colchester would be able to secure significant amounts of funding from any of these fifteen organizations for the purpose of buying out property owners located in the High Risk Zone along Lakeshore Drive.

Organization Name	HQ	Mission	Local Projects?	Direct Land Purchaser?	Purchasing Priorities	Funding Structure	Potential \$
Lake Champlain Land Trust	Burlington, VT	to save scenic beauty, natural communities, and recreational amenities	Colchester (11 properties)	Yes	and available for public use or functioning as critical wildlife habitat	Land Purchases	
Northeast Wilderness Trust	Montpelier, VT	to conserve forever-wild landscapes for nature and people	Jericho	Yes	land that secures wildlife habitat and stores carbon	"Bargain Sales"	
Vermont Land Trust	Montpelier, VT	to save the land that makes Vermont special	Colchester (5 properties)	Yes	land offered by donors, especially natural landscapes	Conservation Easements	
Nature Conservancy	Arlington, VA	to conserve the land and waters on which all life depends	Milton	Yes	at-risk natural areas with high cultural/ecological value or prioritized by donors	Primarily donation-based	
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service	Washington, DC	to help people make investments in their operations and local communities to keep working lands working	minimal work ongoing in Vermont	no, focus on providing financial incentives to landowners looking to conserve	n/a	Conservation Easements	
Vermont River Conservancy	Montpelier, VT	to permanently conserve and protect special lands along the waters of Vermont	Jericho	Yes	Focus on properties containing or bordering Vermont rivers and swimming holes	Land Purchases	
Vermont Housing & Conservation Board	Montpelier, VT	to strengthen our rural economy, protect wildlife habitat, and provide public access to forestland, trails and water	Colchester	Yes	natural areas that provide habitat for rare or endangered species, acquisition of lands to provide public access to trails or water	Primarily provides funding to partnered purchasing bodies	\$150,000 max
Vermont Department of Forest, Parks & Recreation	Montpelier, VT	to conserve the public lands which provide Vermonters with myriad opportunities for recreating, enjoying nature, and simply getting away	Colchester (3 properties)	Yes, but primarily with funds provided by other organizations as opposed to their own	preservation of wild and public lands used for recreation, especially forests	Land Purchases	
The Trust for Public Land - Vermont Office	Montpelier, VT	to protect the land and waters that matter most to Vermont communities—to balance growth with conservation, reduce risk of flooding, attract tourists, and preserve water quality	Burlington	Yes, and also provides funding for other acquisition groups	preserving forests and recreational areas	Land Purchases	
Lake Champlain Basin Program	Grand Isle, VT	to coordinate and fund efforts that benefit the Lake Champlain Basin's water quality, fisheries, wetlands, wildlife, recreation, and cultural resources	work throughout Vermont, including Colchester	no, focus on providing grants for 'local projects that benefit the lake'	n/a	Grants	

Vermont Community Foundation	Middlebury, VT	to bring together people and resources to <i>make a difference in Vermont</i>	work throughout Vermont, not specifically Colchester	no, focus on providing grants for 'long-term or permanent physical enhancements to aquatic and riparian habitat in the tributaries of Lake Champlain'	n/a	Grants (50% match required)	\$50,000 max
US Environmental Protection Agency	Washington, DC	to <i>protect human health and the environment</i>	work throughout Vermont, not specifically Colchester	no, focus on providing grants for 'specific projects, including lakeshore restoration and wastewater system maintenance'	n/a	Grants	
Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation	Montpelier, VT	to <i>preserve, enhance, restore, and conserve Vermont's natural resources, and protect human health</i> for the benefit of this and future generations	work throughout Vermont, including Colchester	no, focus on offering loans & grants for 'wide range of water-quality projects'	n/a	Grants & Loans	