

Chris's Pond Project - Frequently Asked Questions

Prepared by Southwest Harbor Conservation Commission- As of 12/16/2021

What is Chris's Pond? – The Chris's Pond property is owned by the Town of Southwest Harbor and located at Chris's Lane just off Main Street (about ¼ mile south of the Harbor House and Pemetic School). Chris's Pond was once a valuable source of block ice. It is now a popular ice-skating location and a warm-weather destination for picnicking and watching wildlife. Local teachers and students also use the Pond for educational purposes. Thanks to the initiative of local residents and students (the “Pemetic Problem Solvers”), Chris's Pond was conserved for the benefit of the general public as a community natural area and park.

Why expand and improve Chris's Pond? – The current access is via a narrow driveway and there is very limited parking. Two neighbors have offered to sell their properties to help address these challenges and provide opportunity to enhance this community resource. This land allows for a new and safer access from Main Street, better on-site parking, and room for other improvements such as picnic areas, trails, etc.

Who is involved in the Project? – The Conservation Commission (a committee of the Town of Southwest Harbor), Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT), Island Housing Trust (IHT), pond users, neighbors and community members.
Will the planning board and the code enforcement officer be involved? When there are improvements made to the property, yes. The project will need all the required approvals and permits.

What land is being included and what improvements are being considered? – With funding from private donations, MCHT is helping to secure two properties. 1) MCHT has already secured the “Letcher” property – 3/4 acres located to the north at 392 Main Street. The Letcher property would provide space for a new entrance and parking at Chris's Pond. In addition, a portion of the land could be set-aside for year-round workforce housing project, to be developed by Island Housing Trust. 2) The second property is the “Dearden” property – roughly 5 acres that slopes steeply away from the pond's west shore. The Dearden property also includes a narrow strip of land that wraps around the pond's north shore and is currently used for pond parking and the warming hut/storage shed. The existing entrance at Chris's Lane could be limited for maintenance/emergency vehicles, as well as pedestrian/bike traffic. Other improvements being explored include improved pond lighting, rebuilding the storage shed, and improving accessibility throughout the site.

Why is Maine Coast Heritage Trust involved? – MCHT has been involved in protecting Chris's Pond since the early 1990s and holds a conservation easement on the property. MCHT is a nonprofit land conservation organization increasing access to the coast for everyone, making the coast more resilient to climate change, and supporting coastal communities. It serves as the local land trust for MDI communities.

How much would this project cost the Town of Southwest Harbor? - There are three costs to consider— acquisition, improvements, and ongoing maintenance. The land acquisition would be a donation from MCHT, funded by private donations. The Town would seek new grant funding from The Land and Water Conservation Fund to pay for desired improvements. The Town already maintains Chris's Pond, along with a dedicated group of volunteers who provide a great deal of time to support the Pond. Ongoing maintenance costs are not anticipated to increase significantly.

What is the impact on property tax revenue to the Town if the two properties are no longer on the tax roll? According to the 2021/2022 Real Estate Commitment the two properties currently pay \$4,224 in property taxes. Land donated to the Town would be removed from tax rolls. However, portions of both properties may not go to the Town and could remain on the tax rolls.

How do I keep informed about the project? – For more information email chrispondswh@gmail.com.

(Please see the backside for current thoughts about the potential design, the various steps that need to be taken and the rough timeline on the project.)

Updated 12/16/21

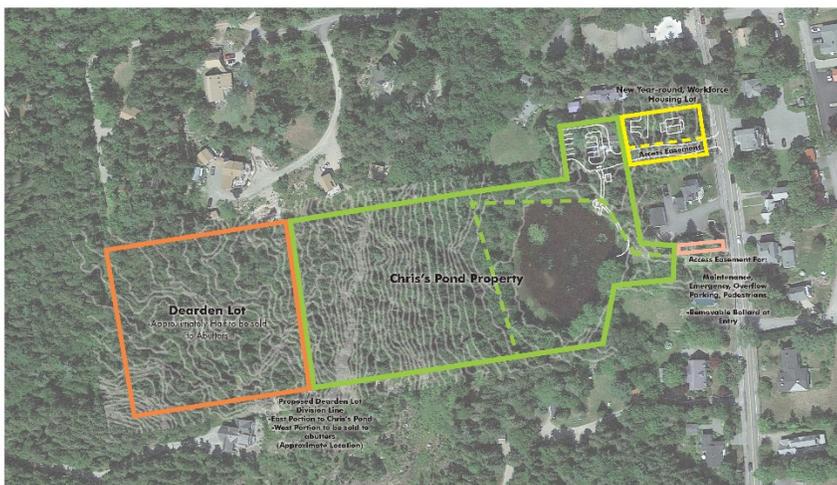
What is the Process and Timeline?

MCHT has been working to secure the two parcels. MCHT would donate all, or portions, of both properties to the Town on the condition that it be permanently conserved as part of its Chris's Pond ownership. The Town would need to formally accept the land donation in a public vote. Excess land that is not donated to the Town for benefiting Chris's Pond could be transferred to the Island Housing Trust or re-sold to private buyers. Grant funding will be sought to fund planned improvements. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant application deadline is July 1, 2022.

The Conservation Commission is currently leading a process, with assistance from LARK Studio of Bar Harbor, to develop a Concept Plan for the project.

- November 13, 2021: Onsite Informational meeting
- December 16, 2021: Second Informational Meeting (in-person and Zoom)
- Until mid-January 2022: Timeframe for collecting input for Preliminary Concept Plan
- Late January 2022: Public Meeting to present conceptual plans
- Until mid-February: Timeframe for collecting further input on Preliminary Concept Plan
- End of February 2022: Presentation of Final Concept Plan at Selectboard Meeting

Property Map and Current Concepts



Chris's Pond
Possible Future Property Map

