

Background Information

Town Council Meeting 10/26/15

Stillings Easement

Request: The Land Management & Acquisition Committee requests that the Falmouth Town Council place a conservation easement on a 23.3-acre portion of Blackstrap Hill Community Forest known as the Stillings parcel.

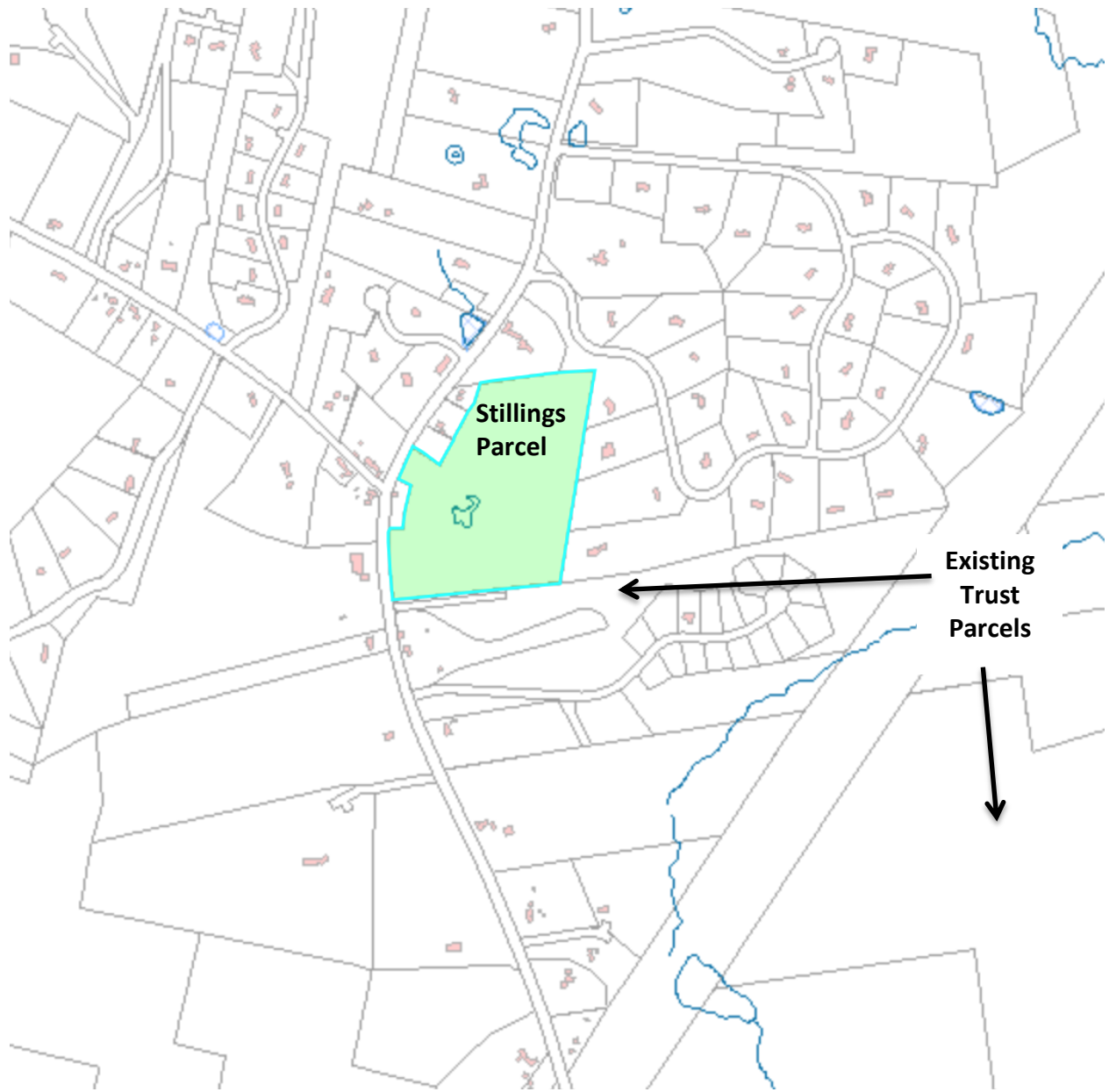
Background: This parcel was acquired in 2009 with town funds through a significant bargain sale by the previous owners, Bruce & Sue Stillings. The town agreed, as part of the terms of that sale, to permanently protect the parcel with a conservation easement. However, the sellers also agreed that the town could hold off on the placement of that easement until it might monetize its value by using that value as an in-kind contribution in a future acquisition grant.

Just such an opportunity arose with our recent Land for Maine's Future grant, partially funding the acquisition of 100-acres abutting the North Falmouth Community Forest. The terms of that grant would have the Trust accept an easement on both the Stillings parcel and the existing 275-acres of unprotected North Falmouth Community Forest land. A contribution of \$25,000 to the Trust's stewardship fund would be made as part of that agreement. [US Forest Service funds were also used in this transaction, but their rules prohibit easements on property acquired with USFS funds.]

The future of our LMF grant is now in doubt due to the Governor's refusal to issue the required bonds. The Town Council recently voted to make up the needed funds to close on the four new acquisitions using town funds. That action completely drained the town's open space account for this fiscal year.

Meanwhile, our obligation to the Stillings remains unmet seven years after our agreement, an increasingly untenable circumstance.

Finances: The Falmouth Land Trust Board of Directors has voted to accept an easement on the Stillings parcel at no cost to the town. The Trust would be accepting this easement with the hope that: (1) the LMF grant funds will be released at some point in the future, thus providing funding for easement protection on both the Stillings and NCF properties; or (2) the Council will authorize funds from next year's openspace acquisition account to make a stewardship contribution for the Stillings parcel. Of course, neither of these possibilities is guaranteed.



**Stillings
Parcel**

**Existing
Trust
Parcels**