

Williamsburg Massachusetts Land for Sale

(updated 8/3/12)

Description: 9.3 acres of partly wooded land bounded by a good trout stream (Bradford Brook) on the west and sloping in “steps” to the stream from Ashfield Rd., opposite its intersection with Conway Rd. Portions of the land are infested with *multiflora* roses and difficult to negotiate. (Their removal would yield a lot of biomass, possibly of use for mulch or biochar.) The northerly portion of the land includes a number of mature and bearing black walnut trees, numerous planted blueberry bushes, and miscellaneous fruit trees, including a few ancient heirloom apple trees. Wild blueberries, some Chinese chestnut, and miscellaneous other fruit trees are scattered in other more or less open areas, however some of these may have been overcome by competition and deer browsing. Much of the formerly open land was planted to Christmas trees, which are now large. Mostly they should be chipped for mulch (especially the Scotch Pine). Some Shipmast black locust have been planted here and there.

The land consists of gently sloping areas that would be practical to return to fields followed by steep slopes to a wetland formerly the bed of Bradford Brook. On the other side of this wet strip is the lower meadow, probably formed by siltation in beaver ponds, and then, proceeding westerly, the brook itself. The land has not been sprayed with anything for at least 40 years, more or less. It is frequented by a large variety of wildlife including deer and black bear.

Taxes: According to the July, 2006 estimated tax bill, the total annual taxes for the land, without “improvements”, were less than US\$280. The taxes have not risen drastically. The land has qualified for many years in a conservation portion of a recreational land use law that allows a reduced taxation. Basically, the law allows the town to bribe us to keep the land in a ‘natural state’. The special tax status *may* transfer with the land title and the discretion of the buyer, with permission of the Board of Assessors. If it does not (because, for example the buyer wants to cut off the timber), it is subject to rollback taxes, basically payment of the waived taxes under the recreation status for the previous 10 years. If the sale incurs rollback taxes, they accrue to the buyer’s cost.¹ (Our copy of the law is not recent, and there may have been amendments that we do not know about. If this is of concern to prospective buyers, they should obtain the current version of Chapter 61B.) A number of land uses are consistent with 61B status, as I understand the matter.

So far as we know, the minimum lot size for the town is 1.5 acres, which is taxed at the normal rate. So a total of 6.5 acres are required to qualify under 61B, to the best of our knowledge.

Advantages: The soil on portions of the upper clearings is exceedingly rich. For the lover of gardening, birds, trees and wildlife this is an excellent site. Ashfield Rd. is maintained to county standards—rather high in Massachusetts. By car it is about 5 minutes to town and another 10 or 15 minutes to the city (County Seat) of Northampton where Smith College is located. One can bicycle to town easily in 15 minutes. With 5 colleges in the area, this rural to semi-rural region of Massachusetts offers more cultural opportunity and intellectual resources than anyone could possibly use. Housing in the area is very tight. There is a bus route between Williamsburg and Northampton. Cooley Dickinson hospital, on the near side of Northampton, is a tertiary care facility. Excellent rural clinics serve the hill towns nearer to Williamsburg.

The land is 20-30 minutes from the intersections of Interstates 90 and 95. Driving time to Bradley International Airport is about the same as taxi travel from Manhattan to Kennedy Airport when I had the misfortune to live in New York City. New York City and Boston are near enough to visit for business or whatever and drive back in the same day, but distant enough not to be directly

¹ Alternately, Massachusetts’ constitution allows for conservation easements to be permanently affixed to the title of land. We have not investigated the details of this option, so the buyer would have to do so if interested. Courts cannot overturn such easements, because the courts cannot overturn the State constitution. The deed is *not* currently restricted by a conservation easement.

troublesome.

At least two sites on the land are suitable for solar building.

Disadvantages: Winter. It is a long, cold, snowy season, but milder than when I lived there.

Closing and Related Costs. Closing costs, rollback taxes if any, surveying costs, and any other costs of sale will be borne by the buyer. *As of August, 2012 we have had a survey completed, but added subdivision costs would be the buyers expense.* Once we have the certified copy of the survey in hand, we will post it on this site.

Subdivision: The land may be subdivided in 2-acre or larger lots with at least 200 feet of frontage. We will only subdivide in patterns that we regard as rational land use, selling lots in sequence, south to north. We prefer to sell the parcel without subdivision. A minimum of 5 acres is required to retain the recreational land tax status, 6.5 acres if you build, again to the best of our knowledge. Obtain a copy of Chapt. 61B from the Internet.

Present Owners: Dan & Cynthia Hemenway, now living in Florida.

Extras: Dan Hemenway will walk the site with the purchaser of the entire 9.3 acres for a one-day consult, also indicating features of the land. This is to be scheduled for mutual convenience sometime after the closing. Dan has taught permaculture worldwide since 1981.

Williamsburg Information: www.burgey.org

Further Information: Cassandra Hemenway Brush will handle inquires and, with ample lead time, may be able to show the land. (She lives in Vermont, but visits her mother in Northampton from time to time.) Contact: cassandrbrush@gmail.com

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