

## Tomasi Meadow Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the Tomasi Meadow?

The Tomasi Meadow is an incredibly scenic meadow adjoining the Town-owned “Casey’s Hill” property in Underhill. Casey’s Hill is a popular location for sledding and cross-country skiing in the winter. Many who take long sled runs on Casey’s Hill end their runs on the Tomasi Meadow, and many have skied along the perimeter of the picturesque property. For those participating in these recreational activities, or simply driving on Pleasant Valley Road, the Tomasi Meadow is an inseparable part of the views and inspirational setting of Casey’s Hill.

### Why a Town purchase of the Meadow?

If the Tomasi Meadow were developed, the character and experience of Casey’s Hill would be changed forever, and recreation that has taken place on the Meadow itself could be sacrificed. A Town purchase of the property will not only protect these values, but it will enable other potential community uses now and in the future. For example, a formal walking trail around the perimeter of the Meadow could be developed, with views to Mt. Mansfield and a scenic overlook to adjoining Browns River wetlands. There could also be outdoor educational use by the Underhill Central School, which is located just down the road from the property.

### Why now?

After decades of careful management of the property, Mary “Pete” Tomasi passed away in 2018, and the Tomasi family is looking to sell the property. The family is not in a position to give the property away, but because the Meadow meant so much to their mother and means so much to the community, they are generously willing to accept less than the full appraised value.

### What is the total cost of the purchase, and how will it be funded?

The total cost of acquiring and conserving the property is \$231,000. The land has been appraised at \$225,000, and the Tomasi Family is willing to accept \$180,000. Costs related to the permanent conservation of the land will be \$51,000, leading to a total conservation budget of \$231,000.

Sources of funding are likely to include:

Vermont Housing & Conservation Board	\$155,000 (approved in September, 2019)
Local Fundraising	\$ 56,000
Town of Underhill	<u>\$ 20,000</u> (to be voted on at Town Meeting)
Total Budget	<u>\$231,000</u>



### **What is the proposed timing?**

The Tomasi family has been working with the Jericho Underhill Land Trust (JULT) and the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) toward the conservation of this land. To secure the property, VLT has obtained a purchase and sale agreement that can be transferred to the Town of Underhill for the Town to purchase the land directly. The purchase and sale agreement extends through the end of August of 2020. A closing in the summer of 2020 would be expected.

### **What are the property tax impacts of the Town's purchase of the land?**

The 16-acre Tomasi Meadow is not taxed as a separate parcel from the remaining Tomasi land and does not have its own listed value. If we apply the appraised value of \$225,000 to the 16-acre meadow, then the meadow's contribution to Underhill municipal taxes would be an estimated \$1,158. If purchased by the Town, the Town will no longer collect these municipal taxes from this property. The owner of a "typical" property in Underhill (\$285,000 listed value) would see an increase of about \$0.86 in their municipal tax bill to absorb this foregone revenue. The impact of foregone school taxes (approximately \$3,653) would be spread across tax payers at the state level, not just Underhill tax payers.

### **Who decides whether the land is purchased by the Town?**

Underhill voters will decide in a vote at Town Meeting whether to authorize the Town of Underhill to purchase the Tomasi Meadow and contribute \$20,000 toward the total project costs. Through participation in property walks, public meetings, individual conversations, and town meetings, the Underhill community has expressed significant enthusiasm for Town ownership and conservation of the Tomasi Meadow.

### **What uses will be allowed on the property?**

Through a public process, the Underhill community will develop a Management Plan to define the uses of the property. Options frequently mentioned by the community include cross-country skiing, a formal walking path, and maintaining the scenic meadow. The management plan can evolve over time.

### **How will the property be protected into the future?**

The land will be subject to a conservation easement held by Vermont Land Trust. The conservation easement will permanently protect the public's access to the land and its important resources, including productive agricultural land, wetlands and natural features, and non-motorized recreational, educational, and other compatible community uses. The conservation easement will restrict activities such as residential, commercial, or industrial development, mining, or manipulation of wetlands, and it requires that a management plan be developed with meaningful community input.