

**Public Services Department
Town of Reading**

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M E M O R A N D U M

To: Chuck Tirone, Conservation Administrator

From: Jean Delios, Assistant Town Manager

Date: January 18, 2022

Re: Proposed Community Garden at the Mattera Cabin, 1481 Main Street in Reading

Conservation Commission Review on 1/26/22

The proposal by a volunteer group to locate a community garden at Mattera Cabin has been well received by the Town of Reading and I am excited to be part of this effort. I hope that the Conservation Commission approves of this use as I think it will breathe new life into the Mattera Cabin area and create an exciting opportunity for the community.

I have attended several coordination meetings with town staff and community garden volunteers as well as a site visit. The volunteers and Town staff have worked very well together to bring this proposal to this point. I have managed the administrative aspects of the with the State Earmark including executing a contract, defining a scope of work, and furnishing the other requirements associated with the grant funds.

Background:

The Mattera Cabin was acquired several years ago by the Town of Reading through a combination of donations from Nelson and Rita Burbank as well as grant funding. The Town placed the Mattera Cabin, including the 2+ acres of open space, under the care and custody of the Conservation Commission. The Cabin is rented for special events and this revenue is used to offset the cost of maintaining the property. The Mattera Cabin Revolving Fund was established with the spending authority designated to the Town's Facilities Director. Annual Town Meeting establishes an annual spending limit for the Mattera Cabin Revolving Fund (in FY22 it was \$10,000).

Community Garden Proposal:

The draft Gardeners Agreement that we have developed with Town Counsel is a license between the Town of Reading and the individual gardeners. Once the volunteers organize into a 501(c)3 or some other entity the plan is for the license to be between the Town and the non-profit.

The Mattera Cabin site is constrained by a limited number of parking spaces that will be shared among the users of the Mattera Cabin, Bare Meadow, and the Community Garden. Managing this shared parking arrangement will be

essential to avoid potential conflicts among the users. The Mattera Cabin users have been identified as having priority use of the parking lot. This has been discussed at some length and town staff has offered ideas and suggestions for consideration beyond just requesting that the gardeners check the schedule and make sure that there isn't an event at the Mattera Cabin before planning to park there.

The license agreement is one way to establish guidelines for the gardeners to follow to prevent conflicts related to the shared parking lot. Since the license agreement is still in draft form it should be noted that more work is needed to provide assurance that the operation of the community garden will complement and not conflict with the use of the Mattera Cabin as well as Bare Meadow.

I look forward to working together so that we can plan for the successful addition of a community garden at Mattera Cabin.