

Conservation commission eyes 30 acres

◆ **Londonderry:** The \$1 million property is on the southern edge of Litchfield Road.

By **TRENT SPINER**

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LONDONDERRY — Local conservation officials are hoping the town's newest piece of protected space comes in the form of a \$1 million, 30-acre piece of land on the southern border of Litchfield Road.

Conservation commissioners, who have already approved the purchase, hope the land will serve as the beginning of a four-mile corridor for wildlife and outdoor enthusiasts stretching along the western edge of town.

"There is going to be a strip basically from Litchfield Road down to Wiley Hill Road," said

Deborah Lievens, conservation commission co-chairman. "It's very impressive for a town like Londonderry, or any town in the southern tier, to piece together a strip of land like that."

At a public hearing on Tuesday — with no residents in attendance — commissioners voted, 6-0, to send their recommendation for purchase to the town council. Funds for the purchase have already been set aside by voters, but the council must first hold a public hearing and vote on the matter.

Commission members have been eyeing the parcel for five years and entered into formal negotiations with the landowner about six months ago, Lievens said. She said it was also on the commission's master plan.

The owner, Mark Cooper, a Derry Realtor, said he originally intended to combine the

30 acres with an abutting 83-acre parcel to construct 63 new homes. State officials notified him in 2005, however, that his 83-acre parcel would be used to mitigate the expansion of Interstate 93. Cooper approached conservation commissioners last year about selling the remaining land.

"Instead of having 63 lots, we only had 14," he said.

Lievens said the 30-acre parcel would be difficult to develop because Watts Brook runs through it, creating "ravine-like" spots in some places.

"This piece will be developed if we don't buy it, there is no question," she said. "It'll be gone, it'll be houses if the town of Londonderry doesn't buy it. Once it's built on, it's never going to be open again."

The council is expected to hold its public hearing on March 3 at 7 p.m. in the town hall.