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For Immediate Release

**Northeastern University Tries to Cut a Deal by Offering Nahant
Unreasonable Expansion Conditions**

Board of Selectmen Rejects Conditions and Suggests Mediation as Next Step

September 29, 2020, Nahant, MA...After taking a vote in an Executive Session, the Nahant Board of Selectmen has unanimously rejected an offer put forth by Northeastern University (NU) which would force the Town to drop litigation and an eminent domain taking in exchange for a fraction of what the Town mainly seeks, which is the preservation of the natural habitat and wildlife preserve located at East Point, the site of NU's planned expansion. The Board of Selectmen, however, has invited the University to engage in mediation in an effort to avoid further acrimony and legal expense.

Mark P. Cullinan, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, states, "We fully agree that it is in the interest of all parties to negotiate a reasonable, mutually acceptable agreement. However, Northeastern's conditions do not adequately address the issue central to any proposed expansion, which is the preservation of the wildlife area on top of, and to the east of, the Murphy Battery. What is at stake is preserving land zoned as a Natural Resource district, which is home to over 170 species of migratory birds and other wildlife, and which is considered to be parkland dedicated to the public's use and enjoyment."

Adds Cullinan, "The Board of Selectmen do not believe that Northeastern's offer reasonably addresses the crux of the dispute, that is, the location of the proposed new building on top of and to the east of Murphy Battery, and the consequent clearing of some 6-8 acres of property that have been protected as an ecological preserve for 50 years. However, we do believe that the offer provides a basis for further negotiations, and therefore propose engaging in mediation. We believe that a highly skilled environmental mediator would help all parties understand the costs and benefits at stake while potentially identifying viable solutions."

The University, which has operated a Marine Science Center on East Point for over 50 years, is planning on building a 55,000 square foot "Coastal Sustainability Institute"

atop the historic Murphy Battery (originally built as part of Boston's Coastal Defense System and now used by the University for classes and research). It plans to drill up to 80 wells in the adjoining valley, construct additional parking lots bordering wetlands for 125 cars, build a 6,000 square foot pump-house, and expand its existing seawater intake system.

According to Cullinan, building atop the Battery and drilling in the adjoining valley are at the crux of the disagreement between the University and the Town. "Despite the Town asking NU to propose a solution on its existing campus which does not destroy the natural habitat above the Battery and in the valley beyond, NU has vehemently refused to offer alternatives," states Cullinan. "This has resulted in an impasse and the Board of Selectmen proposing an eminent domain taking of approximately 12 acres of property and environmental easements to ensure the future preservation of the wildlife preserve, as well as continued passive recreation for visitors to East Point."

Northeastern's offer, which was put forth in a letter dated September 16, 2020, proposes to place a conservation easement on an 8-acre area while promising not to build on the acreage in question, only after it proceeds with their current building plans which are detrimental to East Point's natural habitat. Also, the University, in putting forth its offer, wishes to allow itself access to and control over the 8 acres, while denying the public access to the property that would be subject to the conservation easement.

Further, the University, which as a not-for-profit and in its more than 50 years in Nahant has never offered the Town Payments in Lieu of Taxes, is now proposing to contribute \$6 million to the Town over several years to help pay for infrastructure costs. The payment, according to the University, "is contingent upon the Town of Nahant, the Nahant Preservation Trust, and the individual litigants agreeing immediately to dismiss all pending claims against Northeastern University, agreeing to forgo any eminent domain taking...and agreeing not to oppose the project or object to or appeal from any permit or approval Northeastern requires for the project."

Cullinan adamantly states that while financial restitution from the University is an important component of any agreement which may be reached, the central issue is the destruction of the natural habitat. Further, the Town, in undertaking an assessment of the cost of expansion, believes it will cost taxpayers substantially more than what Northeastern offered, based on the University's use of infrastructure and municipal services over several years.

“The Selectmen,” Cullinan concludes, “are willing to mediate in an effort to avoid further acrimony and legal expense. A win-win outcome is certainly achievable and we urge Northeastern to join us in making a strong effort to achieve it, not only for the Town and Northeastern, but also the public at large and future generations.” Cullinan stated that the Board of Selectmen have conveyed its response to Northeastern by letter, dated September 29, 2020, which rejects the University’s offer, explains why it is inadequate, and proposes mediation.

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The last undeveloped headland between Boston and Maine, East Point has a history dating back 500 million years, to the Cambrian Period, when the rock formations along the coast-line formed, resulting in some of the oldest shelled specimens in the world. Known for its breath-taking beauty, East Point has attracted generations of people, starting with Native Americans and then English settlers. In the 1800s, the land attracted visitors from near and far and helped earn Nahant a reputation as a resort community. The former home of Massachusetts politician and diplomat Henry Cabot Lodge, East Point was then used by the US Military as a Coastal Defense Military Reservation during World War I and II. Today, Nahant’s Lodge Park is located along the top of East Point, surrounded by the ecological preserve and the Atlantic beyond. Northeastern University opened its Marine Science Center at the preserve’s base in 1964, after acquiring a parcel of land from the Federal Government.