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LC000536/SUB A
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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021

A N A C T

RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES

Introduced By: Senators Euer, DiPalma, Archambault, Pearson, Coyne, Sosnowski, and
Mendes

Date Introduced: February 05, 2021

Referred To: Senate Housing & Municipal Government

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 45 of the General Laws entitled "TOWNS AND CITIES" is hereby
2 amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 36.1

4 MUNICIPAL PUBLIC TRUST DEDICATION

5 **45-36.1-1. Legislative purpose.**

6 The purpose of this chapter is to provide a voluntary mechanism for cities and towns to use
7 to dedicate a park, or other conservation land that it owns as public trust land in perpetuity in order
8 to assure preservation of the natural environment and public access to the land for outdoor
9 recreation and to assure that the land is not converted to a use other than the use for which it was
10 originally obtained and remains predominantly undeveloped and continues to provide open space
11 benefits. People rely on their parks and other public open spaces and conservation land as stable,
12 reliable places of comfort, rest, and renewal in their lives. People make decisions on where to reside
13 and work based on proximity to these places. They expect that these places will always be there for
14 them. This expectation is supported by the Rhode Island Constitution, Article 1, Section 17, which
15 states the people:

16 "shall be secure in their rights to the use and enjoyment of the natural resources of the state
17 with due regard for the preservation of their values; and it shall be the duty of the general assembly
18 to provide for the conservation of the air, land, water, plant, animal, mineral and other natural
19 resources of the state, and to adopt all means necessary and proper by law to protect the natural

1 environment of the people of the state by providing adequate resource planning for the control and
2 regulation of the use of the natural resources of the state and for the preservation, regeneration and
3 restoration of the natural environment of the state."

4 **45-36.1-2. Power to declare municipal land as public trust land.**

5 Pursuant to the proper delegation of powers vested in the general assembly by the Rhode
6 Island Constitution, Article I, Section 17, cities and towns may formally dedicate any property they
7 hold that was donated to the city or town, or acquired by the city or town for use as a park or for
8 other conservation purposes as a public trust land, to be perpetually protected from conversion to a
9 use other than the use for which it was originally obtained and from development that is inconsistent
10 with the primary recreation, open space and natural resource purposes as a natural resource land of
11 the state and as a natural environment for the people of the state and to reduce risks of confusion
12 or misunderstanding regarding acceptable and non-acceptable uses of land held by a municipality
13 for outdoor recreation, open space benefits and natural resource conservation.

14 **45-36.1-3. Process for municipal declaration of municipal land as public trust land.**

15 Cities and towns may formally dedicate any property they hold for use as a park or for
16 other conservation purposes as a public trust land, to be perpetually protected from conversion to a
17 use other than the use for which it was originally obtained and development that is inconsistent
18 with its primary purpose as a recreation, open space and/or natural resource land of the state and as
19 a natural-environment for the people of the state through a duly approved resolution of a city or
20 town council or through any other legally sufficient municipal process. Said resolution or other
21 municipal approval shall be recorded in the municipal land evidence records.

22 **45-36.1-4. Restrictions applicable to municipal public trust land.**

23 Once a city or town dedicates property it holds as a public trust land, such land shall be
24 perpetually protected from conversion to a use other than the use for which it was originally
25 obtained and development that is inconsistent with its primary purpose as a recreation, open space
26 and natural resource land of the state and as a natural environment for the people of the state.
27 Acceptable uses of the land so dedicated shall only be those that perpetuate outdoor recreation,
28 open space benefits and natural resource conservation on the land.

29 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES

1 This act would create a voluntary mechanism for municipalities to use to dedicate a park,
2 conservation or other land they own as public trust land in perpetuity, to protect and preserve its
3 future use.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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LC000536/SUB A
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