



## Conservation Commission Meeting

Tuesday, November 26, 2024 at 6:30 PM

Town Hall: Second Floor Meeting Room, 173 Main Street Groton, MA

**OPTION TO JOIN REMOTELY**

**Present:** Bruce Easom, Chair; Larry Hurley, Vice Chair; Kim Kuliesis, Clerk; Olin Lathrop; Peter Morrison

**Absent:** John Smigelski; Alison Hamilton

**Others Present:** Charlotte Steeves, Conservation Administrator

**Bruce Easom, Chair opened the meeting at 6:30PM.**

### 1. APPOINTMENTS AND HEARINGS\*

#### **6:30 PM- Public Hearing- Request for Determination of Applicability- Cow Pond Playing Fields**

Applicant: Jeffrey Oringher, Parks Commission

C. Steeves noted that there were no new updates and expressed concern that the provided map lacked accurate delineations. The Commission emphasized the need for a clearer map to define how far back the mowing would go into the woods; ensuring native vegetation is not disturbed.

O. Lathrop was satisfied with the Parks Commission removing any bushes that are overtaken by Bittersweet but strongly opposed the removal of any trees.

K. Kuliesis supported the maintenance effort, noting that cutting the brush was an appropriate action.

L. Hurley and P. Morrison agreed that the brush could be cleared and removed up to the tree line; provided it did not encroach upon the 50-foot buffer zone.

B. Easom also approved of mowing and the removal of saplings up to 1 inch in diameter.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by L. Hurley, it was:

Voted to issue a Negative 3 Determination under the conditions: 1. Mowing can be mowed up to the tree line and not beyond. 2. Saplings can be removed up to 1.5" in diameter.

**The motion passed unanimously. 5-0**

#### **6:50 PM- Request for Determination of Applicability- 94 Lovers Lane**

Applicant: Sean Campbell, Groton Country Club

S. Campbell presented a proposal to remove invasive vegetation and any fallen logs. At a prior meeting, it was suggested to contact Bob Pine for restoration ideas, and S. Campbell confirmed that B. Pine is willing to assist with replanting efforts.

P. Morrison inquired about the specific items intended for removal. S. Campbell clarified that the plan involved removing Bittersweet and any fallen tree trunks.

L. Hurley questioned whether the wetland had been delineated and expressed approval of the Bittersweet removal, emphasizing that the 50-foot buffer zone should remain untouched. C. Steeves noted that the displayed wetland map was inaccurate and might not clearly show where the wetlands begin.

K. Kuliesis proposed planting a privacy screen with evergreens and leaving the rest of the area undisturbed.

O. Lathrop was opposed of the project, arguing that fallen logs serve as vital habitats for wildlife and contribute positively to the environment.

C. Steeves asked whether the Commission would be willing to purchase the plants. The majority of the Commission expressed willingness to assist with funding for the plants through the Conservation funds. P. Morrison also recommended granting permission to remove any invasive species as part of the project.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by L. Hurley, it was:

Voted to continue the public hearing to the next scheduled on December 10, 2024.

**The motion passed unanimously. 5-0**

## **2. GENERAL BUSINESS**

### **General Discussions/Announcements**

#### ***Discussion: Bank Stabilization at 3 Highland Road***

C. Steeves reported that the homeowner, Lori Megee, had reached out to discuss concerns about bank stabilization along the shoreline. L. Megee noted that all the existing boards had deteriorated and expressed interest in replacing them with a natural rock wall within the existing footprint. The Commission requested that the homeowner provide a detailed plan or drawing with accurate measurements to ensure no additional encroachment. It was suggested that the homeowner take 3-5 measurements from the existing wall to permanent landmarks on the property for accuracy.

The Commission also advised the homeowner to file a Notice of Intent (NOI) for the proposed work. Bill Sturtz, who is assisting L. Megee, mentioned that there is already an open NOI for the installation of a well. However, the Commission determined that the proposed bank stabilization project is substantially different and would require a new filing.

#### ***Discussion: Site Walk for Wooden Wall at 84 Maplewood Ave***

Paul Benoit attended the discussion, sharing that he has observed the wooden wall deteriorating over the past eight years. He clarified that his intention is to protect the existing property from erosion by filling in the area and planting blueberry bushes for stabilization. P. Benoit said that there has been a significant cleanup effort and he had installed the wall during the drawdown of the lake.

P. Morrison questioned P. Benoit's long-term plan, emphasizing that the wooden wall would continue to deteriorate over time. P. Benoit responded that his goal is to preserve the land for future generations and mitigate erosion by filling in the area.

O. Lathrop recommended providing historical photos to demonstrate the original state of the area and suggested exploring natural solutions to reduce wave impacts on the shoreline. He also stressed that all work should cease immediately. L. Hurley asked whether a stone wall could be considered as a more durable alternative.

C. Steeves proposed scheduling another site walk for December 7th and confirmed that a cease-and-desist letter had been issued to halt any further work on the site.

George Marsh informed the Commission that the audio system for online participants was not functioning properly.

### ***West Groton Water Supply District Grading Work Parcel 206-8***

Paul Curtin informed the Commission that the project included renovations on the structure, grading, and spreading crushed stone.

K. Kuliesis observed that some vegetation had been removed to create the gravel patch and questioned the purpose of this area. P. Curtin explained that the site often becomes muddy making access to stored materials difficult. He assured that no other vegetation was removed.

P. Morrison inquired about the water levels in the stream and if the work being conducted was complete. P. Curtin noted that while the Squannacook River occasionally overflows, the stream does not flood to the extent of affecting the stored materials and has never overtopped the bank. He stated that all renovations have been completed.

O. Lathrop expressed concern that the Commission had not been consulted beforehand. He emphasized minimizing disturbances and stated that the gravel should remain, that there should be replanting of small trees, and avoidance of any work within the 50-foot buffer zone.

L. Hurley raised concerns about the proximity of the gravel and stockpiled materials to the stream, recommending that all materials should be stored at least 20 feet away. Additionally, he noted that previous flooding affecting a neighbor was unrelated to the work being conducted and suggested that clearing of the culvert could alleviate any future flooding.

C. Steeves reported that one culvert had been cleared by the Department of Public Works. P. Morrison explained the stream's flow—from the green house, under the road, and through the culvert under the railroad track. He noted that any activities on this side of the street would not impact neighbors on the opposite side of the street.

B. Easom recommended relocating the materials away from the stream closer to the structure and discussing the culvert and potential flooding concerns with Tom Delaney.

P. Morrison summarized the need for a 20-foot buffer from the stream and recommended cleaning upstream debris. B. Easom further suggested storing materials 50 feet from the building. K. Kuliesis requested that snow not be piled near the stream and O. Lathrop proposed planting three trees in the vicinity of the one tree as shown in the photograph.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by L. Hurley, it was:

Voted to issue a Negative 3 Determination under the conditions: 1. A 20 foot undisturbed buffer is left from the stream. 2. Remove any debris or logs that are in the stream's channel. 3. All stockpiled materials are to be removed 50 feet from the stream. 4. There is to be no snow storage within the 20 foot buffer. 5. Planting of 3 native shrubs or trees in approximately the same line as the existing tree.

**The motion passed unanimously. 5-0**

#### ***NOI Follow-Up on Bates Parcel DEP# 169-1217***

B. Easom shared that he observed the site while participating in activities with the Nashua River Watershed. He recommended issuing a Certificate of Compliance once B. Pine confirms that the plastic netting, which currently surrounds the site and poses a hazard to amphibians, has been removed and the land has been properly stabilized.

O. Lathrop agreed, adding that if the site is stabilized, a Certificate of Compliance should be filed. He suggested that the Commission conduct a site walk to verify that the work has been completed satisfactorily.

#### **General Updates from Administrator**

##### ***Update on Wetland Clean-up on Hill Road (Parcel 211-83.1)***

C. Steeves shared a message from Joe Nutile highlighting significant progress on the project and noting that Mr. Hahn had offered to cover the cost of removing the trailers. C. Steeves also mentioned that Mr. Hahn agreed to another site walk however it has to be exclusive with her only, and he declined meeting with the Town Manager. In response, C. Steeves recommended that the Commission seek guidance from the Town Council on the matter. P. Morrison recommended that the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions and the Department of Environmental Protection be contacted as well.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by L. Hurley, it was:

Voted to authorize the Conservation Administrator to contact the MACC and the MassDEP in relation with the issues of receiving access to the Hill Road parcel.

**The motion passed unanimously. 5-0**

#### **Committee Updates**

##### ***CPC Update***

B. Easom reported that the CPC held a meeting last week to review applications, noting that the total requests exceeded available funds. The Committee questioned whether there was any flexibility in the Conservation Commission's \$400,000 funding request. P. Morrison inquired

about the current balance after accounting for all upcoming obligations. C. Steeves was uncertain and stated she would look into it. O. Lathrop recommended that the Commission maintain the full request amount at this stage and avoid reducing the amount.

O. Lathrop provided an update from the Invasive Species Committee, reporting that Fitch-Best Woods is heavily affected by Bittersweet. The Committee plans to wait until April to begin treatment.

### *Land Management & Acquisition*

#### *Site Walk on Lyman Parcel- December 7th*

C. Steeves announced that a site walk has been scheduled at 10:00 AM with the Stewardship Committee and notification letters have been sent to the abutters.

#### *Site Walk Overview- Jack and Judy Palmer Conservation Area*

C. Steeves reported that the site walk was a success, with a great turnout and valuable observations. An old truck on the site sparked discussion; while the Stewardship Committee felt it might be best to leave it in place due to the potential disturbance its removal could cause. L. Hurley proposed that he and J. Smigelski handle its removal. The other Commissioners expressed support for removing the truck. C. Steeves noted that the site walk also included reports on feedback from abutters, a list of their preferences, and discussions about future plans for the area. George Marsh requested a map of the parcel for further context.

O. Lathrop recommended that the land be surveyed. C. Steeves informed the Commission that she had received two quotes and reached out for a third but had not received a response. The Commission requested that the Conservation Administrator obtain either the third quote or a letter declining interest to ensure compliance with the requirement of securing three quotes.

#### *Priest Mowing Update*

B. Easom shared that it took him two days to complete mowing the field, noting that the task was particularly challenging due to fine seeds clogging the radiator.

### *Approve Meeting Minutes*

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by L. Hurley, it was:  
Voted to approve the meeting minutes for October 8, 2024 as amended.  
**The motion passed unanimously. 5-0**

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by L. Hurley, it was:  
Voted to approve the meeting minutes for November 12, 2024 as amended.  
**The motion passed unanimously. 5-0**

### *Approve Invoices*

Upon a motion by L. Hurley, seconded by P. Morrison, it was:  
Voted to approve and pay the invoice from the Groton Herald in the amount of \$140.00.  
**The motion passed unanimously. 5-0**

Upon a motion by L. Hurley, seconded by K. Kuliesis, it was:  
Voted to reimburse Peter Morrison in the amount of \$92.15 and \$59.83 for parts related to the field and brush mower.

**The motion passed unanimously. 5-0**

**3. Open Session for topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of meeting\***

**4. Executive Session pursuant to MGL Ch. 30A, Sec. 21(6):** \* “To consider the purchase, exchange, lease, or value of real estate, if the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body.”

Bruce Easom, Chair; declared that there was business that required the Commission to move to executive session.

**5. Adjournment**

**8:21 PM**

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by L. Hurley, it was:  
Voted to move to Executive Session and not to return to the open session for the purpose of considering the purchase, exchange, lease, or value of real estate, as the chair had declared that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the Commission.

**The motion passed by a roll call vote. (Yes: OL, KK, LH, PM, BE) 5-0**

**APPROVED: December 10th, 2024**