



Conservation Commission Meeting
Tuesday, October 28, 2025 at 6:30 PM
Fully Remote Meeting via Zoom



Present: Chair: Bruce Easom, Larry Hurley, Kimberly Kuliesis, Olin Lathrop, Ben Wolfe, Peter Morrison

Chairman Easom opened the meeting at 6:30 PM. The meeting was recorded and will be available for viewing on the Groton Channel.

1. APPOINTMENTS AND HEARINGS

6:30 PM: Continued Public Hearing – Notice of Intent, 63 Gratuity Road –

DEP# 169-1281

- **Proposal:** Installation of a water line at 63 Gratuity Road.
- **Presentation:** The Chair reported that he received an email stating that the applicant is still waiting on the final peer review letter and therefore they are requesting a continuance.
- **Discussion:**
 - It was discussed that the next meeting technically would take place on November 11, 2025, Veteran's Day, and therefore they needed to reschedule. The next meeting was planned for November 12, 2025.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing for 63 Gratuity Road to November 12, 2025.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The hearing was continued to November 12, 2025.

2. GENERAL BUSINESS

* The chair noted there was extra time available, and so he began the general discussions, committee updates, and land management and acquisition discussions.

2.1 GENERAL DISCUSSIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

November Meeting Schedule Conflict – 11/11 Holiday

- **Presentation:** Commissioners confirmed the November 12, 2025 date for the following meeting

Discussion: MVP Grant and Culvert Replacement off Broadmeadow Road

- **Proposal:** The proposal is to pursue a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grant to complete the engineering and permitting needed for a culvert replacement on Broadmeadow Road, along with invasive species management in Broadmeadow Swamp.
- **Presentation:** Ryan, a representative from the Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA), presented an update on the plan to submit an MVP Expression of Interest on behalf of the Town. The project involves engineering work to replace the aging culvert on Broadmeadow Road, address recurring flooding, and hire a wetland consultant to manage the Phragmites infestation. While the Expression of Interest is due on this day, the formal application would be prepared over the winter with anticipated project work beginning in FY27 if funded.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners asked about the scope of work, including road raising, engineering review, and historical drainage issues such as aging clay pipes. Ryan stated that more information will be gathered before the formal application.
 - Members recommended coordinating with the Invasive Species Committee and DPW, noting that former Highway Director Tom Delaney may have past elevation and floodplain documentation useful for the project.
 - A member of the public, Frank from Dillis & Roy and former Groton resident, confirmed that he previously evaluated raising portions of the road for the Town and encouraged the applicant to obtain those records before Tom Delaney retires.
 - Commissioners expressed support for moving forward with the Expression of Interest, noting the consistent flooding in the area and the need for long-term improvements.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to endorse the MVP Expression of Interest for the work on Broadmeadow Road and the Phragmites in Broadmeadow Swamp.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The Commission endorsed the MVP Expression of Interest. NRWA will continue coordinating with the town, gather additional documentation, and move forward with the submission.

1. APPOINTMENTS AND HEARINGS

*At this time the Commission returned to Appointments and Hearings.

6:50 PM: Continued Public Hearing – Notice of Intent, Off Worthen Drive (Shared Driveway) – DEP# 169-1278

- **Proposal:** Construction of two single-family homes and a shared driveway at Off Worthen Drive, continued review.
- **Presentation:** Frank from Dillis & Roy provided an update following the Commission's comments at the 10/21 meeting. He stated that revised plans were submitted and walked through the key changes. He explained that the driveway grading has been redesigned so that no fill is placed in the wetlands or buffer, and that the only wetland disturbance proposed is temporary and directly tied to removing and replacing the existing culverts. He noted that the plans now include a 3:1 replication ratio, a new Sheet 4 with detailed views of the driveway entrance and southern culvert, and explained that the applicant will be handling the 61A. Frank emphasized that the shoulder grading was tightened to stay out of the wetland, and that riprap will be added along the edge to stabilize the slope and slow runoff.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners agreed that the grading changes and culvert details addressed the concerns raised at earlier meetings. Several members noted that the updated plan keeps all permanent work outside the BVW and that the culvert disturbance is minimal.
 - Members asked for clarification about how the grading was tightened given earlier constraints. The representative explained that the design now uses a very tight 1:1 slope over a short distance, which is why riprap is proposed to stabilize the edge.
 - Commissioners discussed runoff, noting that the road is pitched so rainfall will sheet off to the riprap and filter before reaching the wetland. They agreed the short width of pavement and minimal drainage area keep impacts low.
 - A Commissioner then questioned whether wetland replication was needed at all since all the disturbance is temporary. The applicant agreed to review this and stated he may remove replication from the plans entirely.
 - Commissioners stated they would prefer a clean, updated plan without replication if it is not required. The applicant agreed to confirm this and submit revised plans before the next meeting.
 - A member of the public asked about the stability of a 1:1 riprap slope. Frank acknowledged the challenge but explained that the slope segment is short, will use smaller angular stone, and is expected to vegetate naturally over time, improving stability.
 - No additional public comments were received.

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing to November 12, 2025.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The hearing was continued to November 12, 2025. The applicant will submit revised plans prior to that meeting, including confirmation of whether wetland replication is necessary.

6:54 PM Continued Public Hearing – Notice of Intent, Squannacook River Dam (DEP# Pending)

- **Proposal:** Repairs to the Squannacook River Dam.
- **Presentation:** The continued public hearing was opened. It was noted that no new information or updates had been received from the applicant since the last meeting.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners agreed that without new materials to review, the hearing would need to be continued to the next meeting.
 - No public comments were received.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing for the Squannacook River Dam to November 12, 2025.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The hearing was continued to November 12, 2025.

6:55 PM: Discussion: 28 Boathouse Road – Unpermitted Deck

- **Proposal:** Discussion regarding an unpermitted deck located within the buffer zone.
- **Presentation:** The homeowner was present and explained that all previously required work for the Certificate of Compliance, specifically removal of the silt fence, has been completed. The remaining issue is the deck, which does not appear on any prior plans and for which the Building Inspector could not locate a permit.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners clarified that the structure in question is the side deck, not the permitted front porch. Members noted that the deck is located within the buffer zone and does not appear on any approved filings.
 - Commissioners agreed that the cleanest path forward is an after-the-fact Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA), rather than requiring removal

of the deck. Members stated that the deck appears stable, the surrounding area is vegetated, and removing it would likely cause more disruption.

- o Commissioners discussed the additional side stairway shown in photos. The homeowner reported that the stairs were part of the original house construction and should be included in the original building permit. Members asked that this be confirmed, but agreed this portion should be handled separately.
- o Commissioners reiterated that an RDA would allow the Commission to formally acknowledge the existing structure and determine appropriate conditions without requiring full plans or redesign.
- o No public comments were received.

- **Outcome:** The Commission advised the homeowner to submit an after-the-fact RDA for the side deck. The Administrator will assist the applicant with the filing process. The matter will return to the Commission once the RDA is submitted.

7:10 PM: Request for Determination of Applicability – 495 Chicopee Row

- **Proposal:** Construction of a new septic system and associated grading to serve a proposed snack bar and cider mill building.
- **Presentation:** The public hearing notice was read into the record. The engineer from Dillis & Roy explained that the new building, septic tank, pump chamber, and leach area are all located outside the 100-foot buffer. However, a portion of the required grading needed to meet Title 5 breakout requirements extends into the 100-foot buffer. Approximately 2,600 square feet of grading is proposed within the buffer. The work will also require removal of several fruit trees, including about ten within the buffer. Erosion controls are shown along the limit of work. All access for construction will come from the existing driveway to the south.
- **Discussion:**
 - o Commissioners reviewed the plan and confirmed that the only work within the buffer is grading associated with Title 5 requirements; all system components and the proposed building are outside jurisdiction. Members agreed this is a previously disturbed agricultural area, which makes an RDA appropriate.
 - o Commissioners discussed access routes, site conditions, and the steep slope down to the wetland. Members confirmed that all equipment will enter from the southern driveway and that the system installation typically is completed within roughly a week once work begins.
 - o Commissioners stated they would like the ability to check on the site during construction to ensure grading and erosion controls remain stable, not going down slope. They recommended extending the erosion controls slightly farther upslope toward the existing building.

- o The applicant explained that the system needed a pump due to high groundwater, and that placing the system on the opposite side of the building would cause more disturbance to the agricultural portion of the property.
 - o Commissioners agreed that the plan is straightforward and that the erosion controls, grading, and layout appear appropriate for a Negative 3 Determination.
 - o No public comments were received.
- **Motion:** Noting that this is an RDA, a motion was made and seconded to issue a Negative 3 Determination with the following conditions:
 - o The Commission and/or its agent may conduct site visits during construction to monitor progress.
 - o Erosion controls shall be extended slightly upgradient from what is shown on the plan.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** A Negative 3 Determination was issued with the noted conditions. The applicant may proceed with the project.

7:25 PM: Request for Determination of Applicability – 828 Martins Pond Road

- **Proposal:** Grading work along the side of an existing barn to stabilize the exposed foundation.
- **Presentation:** The public hearing notice was read into the record. The applicant was not present. Commissioners noted that during the earlier site walk, the applicant explained that erosion had undermined a section of the barn foundation and he wished to use on-site fill to grade and support that area. Members recalled that the applicant has been working to clean up the property and that the proposed grading appeared to be farther from the wetland than prior site conditions. No updated plans or measurements were submitted prior to the meeting.
- **Discussion:**
 - o Commissioners discussed that the immediate grading against the barn foundation appears reasonable, but additional work in the middle portion of the property, mentioned during earlier conversations, will require more detailed plans.
 - o Members stated that without the applicant present, it was difficult to confirm exactly where fill would be placed, how far it extends toward the wetland, and what erosion controls are proposed.

- o Commissioners agreed that a simple sketch showing the slope, dimensions, extent of grading, and proposed stabilization is needed before making any determination.
 - o Members requested that staff contact the applicant to clarify what the Commission needs, including erosion controls and a basic plan showing the area to be leveled and how the fill will be contained.
 - o Commissioners agreed that the matter should be continued so that the applicant can attend and provide the requested information.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the RDA to November 12, 2025, and to have the Administrator contact the applicant regarding required information.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The hearing was continued to November 12, 2025. The applicant will provide measurements, a sketch plan, and erosion control details prior to the next meeting.

2. GENERAL BUSINESS

*While waiting for a representative to join the meeting to present, the Chair referred back to the remaining General Business.

2.1 GENERAL DISCUSSIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

309 Boston Road Followup

- **Presentation:** The Chair reported that he, the Administrator, and the Town Manager met with Town Counsel to discuss next steps regarding the enforcement matter at 309 Boston Road. Based on that conversation, the recommendation is to invite the property owner to attend a meeting with the Commission before moving toward more formal action. The Chair noted that while this may be largely a procedural step, it demonstrates good faith and ensures there is no misunderstanding about what the Commission is asking for.
- **Discussion:**
 - o Commissioners agreed that inviting the owner in for a direct conversation is a reasonable next step. Members stated that although progress must continue, the Commission has been consistent in trying to resolve the matter fairly and openly.
 - o Commissioners reiterated that the town is still waiting for a basic list or sketch showing which trees were cut and roughly where. Members noted that if the owner is willing to meet and provide that information, it will allow the Commission to outline the formal steps that follow.

- o Commissioners discussed that once the extent of the tree removal is documented, the next phase would likely involve an after-the-fact filing. That filing may also incorporate any additional work the owner hopes to complete so that everything can be reviewed together.
 - o Members emphasized that the tone should remain calm and civil, and that the goal is to give the owner a clear opportunity to participate and move the process forward.
- **Outcome:** The Commission agreed to notify the Town Manager that they would like to send a written invitation to the owner of 309 Boston Road to attend an upcoming meeting to discuss the matter.

1. APPOINTMENTS AND HEARINGS

*At this time the Commission returned to Appointments and Hearings.

7:50 PM: Discussion: Groton Country Club – Installation of New Poles at Driving Range and New Irrigation System

- **Presentation:** The Chair explained that the Groton Country Club is expected to file an application related to two items: (1) replacing the existing wooden poles at the north end of the parking lot with taller metal poles to support higher netting, as golf balls are currently traveling over the existing net, and (2) installing a new irrigation system. The tall poles would be intended to keep balls within the driving range area, and the irrigation work would likely involve trenching for pipes and sprinkler heads.
- **Discussion:**
 - o Commissioners noted that the project will require a filing, but no application has yet been submitted. Members agreed that based on the description, the irrigation system may fall under an RDA, while the pole and net installation may require additional review depending on the extent of work.
 - o Commissioners discussed the location of the existing poles and the tee area, confirming the need for clarity from the applicant about the proposed height, placement, and scope of work.
 - o Members noted that the applicant was not present, likely due to the high school state championship event scheduled for the same day.
- **Outcome:** The Commission agreed to place the discussion back on the agenda for the November 12, 2025 meeting once the applicant is available and a filing has been submitted.

2.2 COMMITTEE UPDATES

*Still waiting for the representative to join the meeting, the Chair moved on to Committee Updates, Land Management & Acquisition, and approving Meeting Minutes.

Community Preservation Committee (CPC) Update

- **Presentation:** It was reported that the Community Preservation Committee met the previous evening and has received several applications for FY2027 CPA funding. The CPC currently has approximately \$1.1 – \$1.2 million available, and requests exceed the amount of funding expected for the year. Applications include an \$800,000 request from the school district for a new playground at the Boutwell School, additional funding requests from the Town Manager for improvements at Cow Pond Brook, and the Commission's own \$300,000 request.
- **Discussion:**
 - Members discussed that the CPC can typically support only one bonded project at a time. The town still owes roughly \$600,000 on the middle school track bond, and it remains unclear whether the CPC will opt to pay that off this year in order to free up bonding capacity.
 - It was noted that Town Meeting recently approved an out-of-cycle request for additional Cow Pond Brook design work, which positions the town to follow the conditions for a 50% matching grant of up to \$1 million. Additional requests from the Town Manager may follow depending on grant timing.
 - Because the state is not expected to have a budget surplus this year, no supplemental CPA funds are anticipated beyond the regular state match. Revenue projections currently estimate roughly \$900,000 from the local CPA surcharge and approximately \$250,000 from the anticipated October 15 state match.
 - It was noted that the CPC continues to review applications and will need to determine how to prioritize this year's requests given limited funding. The CPC's full financial history and annual project accounting are available on the Town website under the CPC "Budget" folder.

Stewardship Committee

- **Presentation:** It was reported that the Stewardship Committee will be conducting two site walks this coming Saturday, November 1. The first will take place at Carroll Wheeler Park. Although the property is not under the Commission's ownership, the entire park falls within the buffer zone, and the committee is beginning to explore opportunities for a potential grant.

- After that walk, the committee plans to head over to Hayes Woods property for their standard site review. Members will walk the perimeter, look at general site conditions, and check on the turtle nesting area to get a sense of its current state.
- Commissioners and members of the public were encouraged to join. The group will meet at 10:00 a.m. at Carroll Wheeler Park before heading to Hayes Woods.

Sargisson Beach Committee

- **Presentation:** It was reported that the docks were removed on Sunday of last week. They are now out of the water and stored for the winter.

Sustainability Commission

- **Presentation** It was announced that the Sustainability Commission will be holding a free tire recycling event on Saturday, November 1. Normally, tire disposal at the Transfer Station costs \$4 per tire, but a few times per year the Commission offers free drop-off to encourage residents to and bring them in for proper recycling.
- The event will run from 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. this Saturday. Residents are encouraged to take advantage of the free disposal opportunity.

2.3 LAND MANAGEMENT & ACQUISITION

Mowing Updates

- **Presentation:** It was reported that mowing work has continued on several Conservation parcels. Whistle Post Way was recently mowed, and O'Neill Way will be completed next. The final area, Priest Property, cannot be mowed until November 1, and access requires traveling across private property. The Chair requested that permission be obtained from the landowner for access via the driveway, with the goal of completing the mowing on Tuesday, November 4.

Sportsman's Club – Westford

- **Presentation:** A brief update was requested regarding the ongoing matter with the Sportsman's Club in Westford. Commissioners noted that the issue remains unresolved and appears to be awaiting follow-up from the State.
- Members recalled that the state required revisions to the Conservation Restriction and that the Sportsman's Club had concerns with those revisions, but no formal communication has been received since.
- Commissioners agreed that once the Administrator returns, she should follow up with the state to determine the status of the CR and help move the matter forward.

2.4 APPROVE MEETING MINUTES

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the September 23, 2025, minutes as amended.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Motion carried.

OTHER

MACC Annual Conference Update

- **Presentation:** Commissioners who attended the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC) Annual Conference provided a summary of key sessions and takeaways. One member highlighted that the residential permitting workshop was especially helpful, noting that presenters walked through the Wetlands Protection Act section-by-section with detailed slides, making it easier to follow the statutory language.
- Commissioners reported attending the session on second-generation rodenticides, which included updates on statewide efforts to limit or ban their use. Approximately 17 towns have now submitted home-rule petitions, not including Groton, which recently approved its own petition.
- Members discussed that several effective non-toxic rodent control alternatives are now available, and presenters encouraged towns to consider these options in local education and outreach.
- Members shared that discussions with MACC staff helped clarify strict constraints on work within an ACEC, particularly related to filling or altering wetlands. MACC confirmed that such work requires extensive special findings and carries a high risk of appeal.
- A session led by staff from the City of Cambridge was described, focusing on long-term floodplain management. Cambridge is already revising its permitting process to account not only for current FEMA flood maps but also for projected floodplain conditions 50–100 years in the future. The city is requiring new projects to stay out of those projected floodplain areas. While details about state-level review and potential challenges were not discussed, the presentation highlighted that some municipalities are beginning to incorporate climate-projection models directly into permitting decisions.

Discussion: Unpermitted Work – Hill Road

- **Discussion:** A Commissioner asked whether anyone had been able to follow up on the potential unpermitted work discussed at the end of the last meeting, specifically a

reported pool installation occurring within or near the wetland buffer on the Pepperell end of Hill Road. Commissioners tried to locate the previous email reference but were unable to find it during the meeting.

- Members agreed that the item does not appear on the current agenda and that additional clarification is needed before determining next steps.
- **Next Steps:** The Commission will ask the Administrator, upon her return, to confirm the details of the reported work and advise whether a site walk or formal agenda item is needed.

1. APPOINTMENTS AND HEARINGS

*At this time the Commission returned to Appointments and Hearings.

8:15 PM: Notice of Intent (Under By-Law) – 500 Main Street

- **Proposal:** Construction of a 200-unit residential development, including reconfiguration of previously approved buildings and parking areas, and upgrades to stormwater management.
- **Presentation:** The public hearing notice was read into the record. The engineer from Dillis & Roy gave a history of the project, explaining that the site was previously approved under a 40B Comprehensive Permit in 2023 and that an Order of Conditions was issued for that plan, which remains valid until 2029 under the Permit Extension Act. He explained that the updated design consolidates three earlier apartment buildings into one U-shaped building while keeping the total unit count at 200, with several townhouse units shifted into the main building but no change to the overall program. He stated that the new layout is more efficient and reduces impervious area both across the site and within the 100-foot buffer. The stormwater system continues to meet all ten state standards, with three stormwater areas being reconstructed or enhanced as stormwater wetlands or a wet basin. He also noted that peak runoff rates and volumes are lower than existing conditions and that infiltration increases due to the added green space.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners clarified that this filing must be reviewed as a new submission under the Town's Wetlands Bylaw, and that prior approvals under the Wetlands Protection Act are not relevant with all of the changes to the plan. Members noted the bylaw's 50-foot no-disturb zone and 100-foot no-structure limit and emphasized that the evaluation needs to be based on current conditions, not previously permitted plans.

- o Commissioners stated that the current plans are on separate sheets and at different scales, making it difficult to evaluate changes in the 50- and 100-foot buffers without a visual comparison.
- o Members noted that a corner of the proposed garage extends slightly into the 100-foot buffer. They explained that the overlay needs to clearly show what is being removed, added, or replaced in that area so they can determine if the design satisfies the bylaw.
- o Members also requested that the lighting plan be resubmitted as a standalone document, noting that expectations and standards for lighting mitigation have evolved since the 2023 filing and will require closer review this time.
- o Several commissioners acknowledged that the reductions in impervious surface and the use of constructed stormwater wetlands are positive elements of the plan.
- o A site walk was discussed, but Commissioners did not feel a site walk was necessary at this time.
- o Before continuing the hearing, the Commission outlined exactly what they expect at the next meeting:
 - An overlay drawing showing existing conditions and proposed conditions on the same sheet, with clear identification of changes within the 50- and 100-foot buffers.
 - A standalone lighting plan for focused review.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing to November 12, 2025.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The hearing was continued to November 12, 2025. The applicant will return with the requested materials.

8:25 PM: Minor Change Request – 500 Main Street

- **Proposal:** Request for a minor change to update the approved plans tied to the existing Order of Conditions for the previously permitted 200-unit 40B project at 500 Main Street.
- **Presentation:** The applicant's engineer explained that the existing 40B Permit and the associated Order of Conditions under the Wetlands Protection Act are still valid through 2029 due to the Permit Extension Act. He stated that the current property owner and the prospective buyer are moving forward with a revised version of the project, but they do not want to file a new Order of Conditions because doing so would invalidate the existing 40B permit, something the current owner is not willing to risk. To avoid that

outcome, they asked the Commission to treat the updated plans as a minor change to the existing Order, while the revised design is reviewed separately under the local bylaw through a new Notice of Intent.

- **Discussion:**

- Members agreed it would be cleaner and more efficient to review both items together so that both the state Order and the new bylaw Order ultimately reference the same final plan.
- Commissioners stated they would review the existing Order of Conditions before the next meeting to confirm if its conditions could apply to the revised design, or if any of the original conditions would conflict with the new layout.
- Members noted that the existing Order and the bylaw Order often contain overlapping protections, and that having both sets provide stronger enforcement if needed.
- The Chair summarized that the applicant should return with an overlay drawing showing existing conditions and the proposed design on the same sheet.
- The applicant agreed that continuing the matter and addressing both reviews together made sense.
- No public comments were received.

- **Outcome:** The Commission agreed to place the minor change request for 500 Main Street back on the agenda for November 12, 2025, to be reviewed concurrently with the related Notice of Intent. No vote was required.

ADJOURNMENT

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The meeting adjourned at 8:56 PM.

APPROVED: 1/27/2026