



Conservation Commission Meeting
Tuesday, November 25, 2025 at 6:30 PM
Town Hall: Second Floor Meeting Room
173 Main Street Groton, MA
OPTION TO JOIN REMOTELY



Present: Larry Hurley, Olin Lathrop, Peter Morrison

Virtual: Chair: Bruce Easom, Ben Wolfe

Others Present: Charlotte Steeves, Conservation Administrator

The meeting opened 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: Request for Certificate of Compliance – Florence Roche Elementary School – DEP# 169-1227

- **Presentation:** Representatives for the applicant appeared and provided an update on cleanup efforts since the last meeting. They reported that the majority of erosion control materials have been removed, including a large section of silt fencing observed during the recent site walk. Remaining materials consist primarily of small fragments. Applicant representatives also stated that trash observed on site was collected and removed, including both construction-related debris and other litter encountered during cleanup.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners discussed observations from the recent site walk and expressed continued concerns regarding remaining silt fencing material, particularly plastic webbing embedded in soil, and visible trash.
 - Members stated that while progress has been made, the site is not yet ready for issuance of a Certificate of Compliance and that additional cleanup is required.
 - Commissioners emphasized that remaining erosion control materials must be removed to the greatest extent possible and that visible trash must be addressed prior to approval.

- o Commissioners agreed that once additional cleanup is completed, a site inspection by the Conservation Administrator would be appropriate to determine compliance, without the need for another public hearing.
- o The applicant requested clarification regarding expectations for final cleanup. Commissioners responded that visible and significant remaining materials must be removed, and that the site should be free of trash and exposed erosion control materials at the time of inspection.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to authorize issuance of a Certificate of Compliance for DEP# 169-1227, contingent upon final site inspection and approval by the Conservation Administrator confirming that remaining erosion controls and trash have been removed.
- **Vote:** Roll call vote taken. All members voted in favor.
- **Outcome:** The Certificate of Compliance will be issued administratively following confirmation by the Conservation Administrator that cleanup is complete. No additional public hearing is required.

6:35 PM Continued Public Hearing – Notice of Intent, Squannacook River Dam – DEP# Pending

- **Proposal:** Repairs to the Squannacook River Dam.
- **Presentation:** It was reported that no new information or updates have been received from the applicant since the last meeting.
- **Discussion:**
 - o Commissioners agreed that without new materials or updates to review, the public hearing must be continued.
 - o Members suggested that staff reach out to the new DPW Director to request an update, noting that the hearing has been continued multiple times without additional information from the applicant.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing to December 9, 2025.
- **Vote:** Roll call vote taken. All members voted in favor.
- **Outcome:** The public hearing was continued to December 9, 2025.

6:36 PM: Continued Public Hearing – Notice of Intent, 63 Gratuity Road – DEP# 169-1281

- **Proposal:** Installation of a water line at 63 Gratuity Road.

- **Presentation:** A representative from appeared on behalf of Routhier & Roper Gratuity Road LLC. He reported that an updated flood study was submitted on 11/18 and circulated to the Town and Nitsch Engineering. Nitsch Engineering then also issued an additional peer review letter dated 11/24. The applicant stated that the updated study incorporated the Commission's prior direction, including use of a Manning's roughness coefficient of 0.13 for overbank areas and expansion of the watershed analysis. The applicant explained that the watershed was extended to Common Street and Hollis Street based on GIS data and StreamStats analysis and noted that an updated watershed map has been prepared for peer review.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners reviewed the expanded watershed mapping and discussed whether all contributing areas are fully captured.
 - Members noted that while progress has been made, additional clarification and mapping may still be needed to confirm watershed extents and floodplain accuracy.
 - The applicant stated they will provide Nitsch Engineering with a detailed watershed map and additional model inputs requested.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing to December 9, 2025.
- **Vote:** Roll call vote taken. All members voted in favor.
- **Outcome:** The public hearing was continued to December 9, 2025.

Stewardship Committee – Appoint Alex Lewis

- There was extra time available before the next scheduled agenda item, and members chose to appoint Alex Lewis at this time.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to appoint Alex Lewis to the Stewardship Committee.
- **Discussion:**
 - It was noted that Alex Lewis is an abutter to the Meadowbrook property, has been involved in bittersweet removal efforts, attended the most recent Stewardship Committee meeting, and was unanimously recommended for appointment by the Stewardship Committee.
- **Vote:** Roll call vote taken. All members voted in favor.
- **Outcome:** Alex Lewis was appointed to the Stewardship Committee.

7:00 PM: Continued 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 applicants were not present. Commissioners who participated in the site walk provided an overview of site conditions observed during the visit.
- **Discussion:**
 - Members noted loose soil located downslope and expressed concern about the potential for sediment to migrate into the wetland during winter rain events.
 - Commissioners discussed the need for immediate erosion controls, including installation of a silt fence keyed in downslope of the loose soil and stabilization of exposed soil to reduce runoff.
 - Members noted that the soil material present contains a high percentage of fines and clay, which may make vegetation difficult without additional stabilization measures.
 - Commissioners discussed that any future grading or filling within the area would require a separate filing with plans clearly showing the 100-foot buffer zone and proposed work limits.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to issue a Negative Determination #3, finding that the work described is within the buffer zone but will not alter an area subject to protection under the Wetlands Protection Act, subject to the following conditions:
 - A silt fence will be installed downslope of the loose soil.
 - The exposed soil will be stabilized by spreading straw or a similar material.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** A Negative Determination #3 was issued with conditions.

7:10 PM: Request for Certificate of Compliance – 16 Moose Trail – DEP# 169-1276

- **Presentation:** The applicant appeared regarding a completed project that was previously approved under an Order of Conditions. The work included upgrades to a failing septic system, installation of a new drinking water well, minor grading and drainage improvements, and construction of an addition to the existing single-family home. An as-built plan was submitted and reviewed, with no significant differences noted from the approved plans.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners stated that the overall site work appeared well done and that the project was substantially complete.

- o Discussion focused on a condition in the Order of Conditions requiring the planting of six native trees. Commissioners observed that three trees were planted, including a white oak, a red maple, and a cherry species.
- o Members discussed whether the planted trees met the "native" requirement and noted some uncertainty regarding the specific species of the cherry tree.
- o Some Commissioners expressed concern about strict compliance with the condition, while others noted that the trees were healthy, established, and that requiring removal and replanting could cause unnecessary disturbance.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to issue a Certificate of Compliance.
- **Vote:** The motion passed by a majority vote (3-2). PM, LH, BW: Yes, BE, OL: No
- **Outcome:** A Certificate of Compliance was approved.

7:15 PM: Approve Order of Conditions (Under By-Law) – 500 Main Street

- **Presentation:** The draft Bylaw Order of Conditions was presented and Commissioners reviewed the conditions one by one.
- **Discussion:**
 - o Members agreed with the majority of the standard conditions, including recording requirements, construction timing restrictions related to turtle protection, stormwater compliance, post-construction documentation, and invasive species monitoring.
 - o Discussion focused on lighting conditions, specifically the need to prevent direct light from impacting nearby wetlands.
 - o Commissioners agreed that shielding should be required on perimeter parking lot lights adjacent to wetlands, without adding overly technical performance metrics that could be difficult to enforce.
 - o There was also discussion about biodegradable erosion controls; members agreed this is a good practice for future projects but should not be added here, as erosion controls are already installed.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the Bylaw Order of Conditions with revised lighting language.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The Bylaw Order of Conditions for 500 Main Street was approved, including a requirement that perimeter light fixtures be shielded to prevent direct lighting of wetland areas.

7:25 PM: Minor Change Request – 500 Main Street DEP# 169-1263

- **Presentation:** The Commission reviewed a request for a minor modification to the previously issued Order of Conditions under the Wetlands Protection Act. It was noted that consideration of the minor change had been deferred until the Bylaw Order of Conditions was finalized.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners confirmed that the changes reflected in the updated plans are consistent with what was reviewed under the bylaw and qualify as a minor change.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the plans dated 11/04/2025 as a minor change to the Order of Conditions.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The minor modification to the Order of Conditions for 500 Main Street was approved.

7:30 PM: Approve Order of Conditions – 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:** The Commission reviewed the draft Order of Conditions and walked through the standard conditions.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners reviewed and agreed on the general and post-construction conditions.
 - Discussion focused on erosion and sedimentation controls, with members expressing concern about long-term plastic debris from wattles and hay bales bound with plastic.
 - The Commission agreed to revise the Order of Conditions to require that any hay bales or wattles used be fully biodegradable and not bound with plastic string or encased in plastic netting.
 - Members also agreed to revise the Certificate of Compliance language to require removal of all non-biodegradable erosion controls, allowing biodegradable controls to remain in place if desired.
 - The Commission noted that these revisions would apply going forward as a standard practice.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the Order of Conditions with the revised erosion control language.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The Order of Conditions for Off Worthen Drive was approved.

7:35 PM: Notice of Intent – Hollingsworth & Vose Landfill Closure – DEP# Pending

- **Presentation:** It was reported that no DEP number has been issued for this project. Staff shared that the applicant requested the hearing not be opened at this time and instead asked that the item be placed on a future agenda once materials are ready.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners agreed that since the hearing has not been opened and no filing is available, no action is required at this time.
- **Outcome:** The item was continued to December 9, 2025.

7:45 PM: Discussion – Groton Country Club – Installation of New Poles at Driving Range and new Irrigation System

- **Presentation:** The General Manager of Groton Country Club appeared to discuss three related projects: replacement of existing wooden driving range poles with taller metal poles, installation of crushed stone near the driving range to prevent golf balls from embedding in saturated soil, and a future irrigation system project including a new pump house.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners discussed the proposed replacement of existing wooden poles with taller metal poles and noted concerns related to soil disturbance, equipment access, and erosion during installation.
 - Members agreed that filing a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) would be appropriate to allow the Commission to review details and conduct a site visit.
 - The applicant also described a proposal to install crushed stone and landscape fabric in a wet area near the driving range to prevent balls from becoming embedded in the soil. Commissioners agreed this should be included in the same RDA for review.
 - The applicant presented a preliminary concept for a future irrigation system, including a new pump house near wetlands. Commissioners discussed potential wetland buffer constraints and noted that this project would require a separate filing.
 - Members advised that an RDA would be the first step for the irrigation proposal to identify constraints before pursuing a full Notice of Intent.
- **Outcome:** The applicant was advised to file an RDA for the pole replacement and crushed stone work, and a separate RDA for the irrigation system for preliminary review.

2. GENERAL BUSINESS

2.1 GENERAL DISCUSSIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Fisheries and Wildlife Discussion with Anne Gagnon

- **Presentation:** Anne Gagnon provided background on pending Conservation Restrictions (CRs) associated with Town-owned conservation land and prior grant requirements.
- **Discussion:**
 - Ms. Gagnon reviewed the history of the CR process, including prior grant conditions, parcel eligibility, and the importance of resolving outstanding restrictions for future grant eligibility.
 - Commissioners discussed the need to document existing trails on parcels proposed for CRs and reviewed how trail mapping is currently managed through coordination with the Trails Committee.
 - Members discussed the challenges of managing public-facing trail maps and agreed that establishing an agreed-upon snapshot of existing trails would be a reasonable first step.
 - Commissioners expressed continued interest in pursuing CRs with Massachusetts Fisheries and Wildlife and agreed additional coordination and site walks would be needed.
- **Outcome:** Staff will work with Massachusetts Fisheries and Wildlife to move the CR process forward, including trail documentation and scheduling future site walks.

Potential Violation at 101 Longley Road

- **Presentation:** Staff reported observing extensive earth removal, grading, and vegetation disturbance within the buffer zone to a stream, with no erosion controls in place and no filing submitted to the Conservation Commission.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners reviewed photographs taken from the public trail easement and discussed the extent of disturbance and lack of erosion controls.
 - Members reviewed the draft Enforcement Order and agreed that work should stop and that a Notice of Intent should be required for permanent work.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to issue an Enforcement Order, as drafted and revised during the meeting.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

- **Outcome:** An Enforcement Order will be issued.

2.2 COMMITTEE UPDATES

- Members reported that new trail signage has been installed on several conservation properties.
- The Stewardship Committee conducted a site walk at the Hayes Conservation Land. During the walk, members identified debris from a house fire on an abutting property off Pepperell Road. It was noted that the fire debris appears to have been blown into the conservation land during the fire due to windy conditions and includes potentially hazardous materials.
- The Conservation Administrator reported that she visited the site with the developer and a member of the Stewardship Committee. Debris was found in a cone-shaped pattern extending toward the power line clearing. A small bag of debris was collected during the visit.
- The developer agreed to have a crew conduct a more thorough sweep of the affected area to remove remaining debris. Members acknowledged that cleanup may not be perfect due to the extent and location of the material, but noted that additional cleanup efforts are underway.

Stewardship Committee Update

- It was reported that the Stewardship Committee has scheduled a site walk at the Eliades Conservation Area on December 13. Commissioners were encouraged to attend.
- The purpose of the site walk is to review existing conditions and support updates to the management plan, including determining appropriate mowing locations and timing.

Community Preservation Committee Update

- A member reported that the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) is considering not accepting CPA applications for FY 2027.
- The CPC is discussing using available CPA funds to pay down debt service on the middle school track in order to avoid overlapping debt obligations.
- Members agreed to monitor the situation and follow up with CPC staff for additional information.

2.3 LAND MANAGEMENT & ACQUISITION

Review & Approve Stewardship Management Plan for Gibbet Hill

- Staff reported that additional information is needed from the Historic Committee before the plan can be finalized.
- Review of the Stewardship Management Plan was postponed.

Review & Accept Conservation Restriction Agreement for Florence Roche Elementary School

- **Presentation:** Staff presented a revised Conservation Restriction plan after correcting a prior mapping issue.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners reviewed the updated plan and discussed concerns regarding map resolution and long-term clarity.
 - Members agreed the restriction boundaries appear correct but requested a higher-quality map for the final recorded document.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to accept the Conservation Restriction, contingent upon receipt of a higher-resolution map.
- **Vote:** Roll call vote taken. All members voted in favor.
- **Outcome:** The Conservation Restriction was accepted with the noted condition.

Mowed Parcels Update

- **Presentation:** Commissioners reported that several conservation parcels were mowed during the season, including the O'Neill Parcel and portions of the Eliades Conservation Area north of James Brook.
- **Discussion:**
 - Members discussed whether mowing obligations continue for the Crosswinds parcel and noted uncertainty regarding existing Conservation Restriction requirements.
- **Outcome:** Staff will research the status of the Crosswinds parcel and report back.

Generous Donation to the Conservation Commission

- **Presentation:** Staff reported receipt of a \$25,000 donation from Janet Fertig and Marshall Daguerra, a former Conservation Commission member.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners expressed appreciation for the donation and discussed preparing a framed letter of thanks.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to authorize preparation and sending of a formal thank-you letter.

- **Vote:** Roll call vote taken. All members voted in favor.
- **Outcome:** A framed letter of appreciation will be prepared and sent.

Groton Hill Music Center Work

- **Discussion:**
 - Concerns of ongoing land alteration activities, soil movement, and construction of a stone wall at the Groton Hill Music Center property, including work near James Brook and within an Agricultural Preservation Restriction.
 - Commission members reviewed photographs taken earlier that day showing a large soil berm and the proximity to James Brook.
 - Commissioners expressed concern about work continuing without filings and some confusion over whether earlier guidance had allowed construction to move forward.
 - It was noted that APRs do not exempt a property from the Wetlands Protection Act.
 - Members discussed whether the Conservation Commission has responsibility as the APR grantee and agreed that additional clarification is needed.
 - Commissioners agreed that MDAR should be contacted to review the work and help determine compliance requirements.
 - The discussion then shifted to the stone wall construction near James Brook. Members noted that work had continued without a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) being filed, despite the expectation that one would be submitted.
 - Concern was raised that continuing work without a filing undermines the Commission's regulatory process.
 - **Motion:** A motion was made to issue an Enforcement Order to Groton Hill Music Center to stop work within 100 feet of James Brook related to the stone wall until the appropriate filings are submitted.
 - **Vote:** Roll call vote taken. All members voted in favor.
 - **Outcome:** Enforcement Order approved unanimously.
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2.4 APPROVE MEETING MINUTES

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the October 14, 2025 meeting minutes as amended.

- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

2.5 APPROVE INVOICES

- **Motion:** A motion was made to reimburse Olin \$703.18 for sign materials.
 - **Motion:** A motion was made to pay Groton Herald \$65.00 for advertising.
 - **Motion:** A motion was made to reimburse Paul Punch \$49.98 for hardware used for signage.
 - **Votes:** All motions passed unanimously.
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ADJOURNMENT

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVED: 2/10/2026