



Conservation Commission Meeting
Tuesday, December 9, 2025 at 6:30 PM
Town Hall: Second Floor Meeting Room
173 Main Street Groton, MA
OPTION TO JOIN REMOTELY



Present: Chair: Bruce Easom, Larry Hurley, Kimberly Kuliesis, Olin Lathrop, John Smigelski, 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: Retroactive Request for Determination of Applicability – 28 Boathouse Road (Unpermitted Deck)

- **Proposal:** Retroactive Request for Determination of Applicability filed for construction of a deck at 28 Boathouse Road under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Groton Wetlands Protection Bylaw.
- **Presentation:** The applicant appeared and stated that all hay bales and silt fencing have been removed from the wetland as previously requested and that the silt fence is fully out of the wetland. He also submitted a drawing showing the deck, which measures approximately 9 feet by 21 feet and is located on the right-hand side of the house.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners noted that the deck was not shown on the original approved plans, which is why the Commission requested the drawing. Staff reported that no permit for the deck could be located, although it appears to have been constructed many years ago.
 - Several Commissioners stated that removing the deck did not make sense and supported allowing it to remain, noting that the applicant had stepped outside the permitting process.
 - One Commissioner expressed concern that approving the deck without mitigation would be unfair to applicants who followed the rules, noting that the

deck is within the 100-foot buffer and likely within the 50-foot buffer. It was stated that if the deck had been permitted originally, the Commission likely would have required changes or some form of environmental compensation.

- o Commission members discussed options including planting native vegetation, creating a pollinator garden, installing shrubs, or allowing part of the yard to revert to a more natural state. Concerns were raised about long-term maintenance of pollinator gardens and potential future issues with large trees.
- o Commissioners emphasized the need to be specific about any mitigation requirements and noted past issues caused by vague conditions. Members agreed the applicant should return with a simple drawing showing the proposed renaturalized area, with dimensions tied to permanent features on the property.
- o It was discussed that staff would provide a list of appropriate native plant options from the Native Plant Trust. The applicant agreed to return with a revised plan.
- **Motion:** A motion was made to continue the hearing to allow the applicant to submit a drawing showing the proposed mitigation area.
- **Vote:** All members voted in favor.
- **Outcome:** The hearing was continued to December 23, 2025.

6:40 PM: Continued Public Hearing – Notice of Intent – Squannacook River Dam DEP# PENDING

- **Proposal:** Repairs to the Squannacook River Dam.
- **Presentation:** Staff provided an update received from Tom Delaney. He reported that the consultant is finishing work related to Natural Heritage, which had been part of the delay. Once that is completed, the project will return to the Town of Shirley, and after matters with Shirley are closed out, the project will return to Groton.
- **Motion:** A motion was made to continue the hearing.
- **Vote:** All members voted in favor.
- **Outcome:** The hearing was continued to December 23, 2025.

6:41 PM- Notice of Intent- Hollingsworth & Vose Landfill Closure- DEP# PENDING

- **Proposal:** Notice of Intent filed by Hollingsworth & Vose for closure of an existing landfill.
- **Presentation:** Representatives for Hollingsworth & Vose appeared to introduce the project and begin the permitting process. It was stated that the landfill has been in use for approximately 50 years and ceased operations a few years ago. The project is currently undergoing the closure process with MassDEP. It was explained that the

Commission's jurisdiction relates to grading activities and portions of the stormwater management system located within wetland buffer zones. The landfill footprint is approximately four acres within a twenty-acre site. The closure includes installation of an impermeable cap with eighteen inches of soil cover.

- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners expressed support for the overall design and noted the drainage separation approach was well thought out.
 - Questions were asked regarding the source and type of soil used to cover the cap and it was stated that standard topsoil would be used and sourced by the contractor per project specifications.
 - The applicant explained that the cap will be vegetated with a pollinator seed mix developed in coordination with a seed supplier, with a long-term monitoring and maintenance plan to establish pollinator species and control invasives.
 - Commissioners confirmed that the project is subject to an Operation and Maintenance Plan required by the Commonwealth, including ongoing monitoring and maintenance, and that existing monitoring wells will continue.
 - Commissioners raised concerns about phragmites management. The applicant stated phragmites within the capped area will be contained beneath the cap and that invasive species will be managed through annual removal.
 - Commissioners raised concerns about the long-term use of a 40-mil HDPE liner, including degradation and microplastics. Alternatives such as clay were discussed. The applicant stated the HDPE liner was chosen from the MassDEP's landfill closure technical manual and agreed to provide confirmation.
 - Commissioners emphasized the need for flexibility to mow up to twice per year if needed. This is to control woody vegetation and invasives. Seasonal and habitat restrictions will still apply.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the Notice of Intent to the next meeting.
- **Vote:** All members voted in favor.
- **Outcome:** The Notice of Intent was continued to December 23, 2025, pending receipt of a DEP number and any comments.

6:50 PM: Discussion: Conservation Restriction at 44 Farmers Row

- **Proposal:** Discussion regarding a potential new Conservation Restriction (CR) at 44 Farmers Row, associated with the Lawrence Homestead property.
- **Presentation:** The Lawrence Homestead property at the corner of Farmers Row and Long Hill Road was reviewed. It was explained that an existing CR covers the hayfield

portion of the property, while an approximately two-acre area near the house, identified as a historic landscape, is not currently restricted. The proposal would add a CR to this area to prevent future development and preserve the landscape.

- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners expressed general support for adding a CR to preserve the historic landscape and prevent future development, noting the visual, historic, and community value of the area.
 - It was discussed that the proposed restriction would differ from a typical CR, as it would allow landscape restoration and ongoing landscaping, while still prohibiting buildings within the restricted area.
 - Commissioners discussed whether the area would be public or private and acknowledged that, while not publicly accessible, the restriction would still prevent development and preserve open space.
 - It was confirmed that establishing the CR would require a survey and a formal plan, and that this item was presented as a preliminary discussion, with a full proposal anticipated at a future meeting.
- **Outcome:** The Commission expressed general support for the concept of a CR. The matter is expected to return to the Commission at a future date with additional documentation.

7:00 PM: Discussion: Groton School Pond Beavers

- **Presentation:** It was explained that following prior flooding related to beaver activity, a beaver deceiver was installed and is functioning properly. A roughly 20-foot section of the existing access road became saturated during the flooding and has remained soft. The request is to place crushed stone in this area to stabilize the road and prevent further damage. Guidance was requested on whether this work should proceed as maintenance, a field change, or under a new Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA).
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners discussed whether the proposed work should be considered routine maintenance of an existing access road or new work requiring review.
 - It was noted that a prior emergency order related to beaver mitigation had expired and that an earlier RDA could not be amended after the fact.
 - Several members stated that without a site visit, it was difficult to assess if the work qualifies as maintenance, and expressed interest in seeing current site conditions.
 - Differing recollections were noted regarding prior access routes and whether this road was intended to remain in use following earlier work.
 - Commissioners stated that the proposed work should be reviewed through a new RDA, with a sketch and site visit once conditions allow.

- **Outcome:** The Commission advised that the work should proceed under a new RDA after the applicant indicated the RDA would be filed in the spring when site conditions can be reviewed.

7:05 PM: Issue Request for Certificate of Compliance- Florence Roche Elementary School DEP# 169-1227

- **Proposal: Request for issuance of a Certificate of Compliance for the Florence Roche Elementary School project.**
- **Presentation:** Staff reported that the Commission had previously voted to issue the Certificate of Compliance pending a site walk. Staff conducted a site walk the prior Monday and reported that the site was clean, with no visible trash. A few small pieces of netting were collected, and no buried materials were observed.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners confirmed that the Certificate of Compliance had already been approved at the prior meeting, contingent on staff verification.
 - It was noted that the site conditions observed during the site walk satisfied the Commission's requirements.
 - Commissioners agreed that the Certificate of Compliance reflects site conditions at the time of inspection.
- **Outcome:** The Certificate of Compliance was finalized and presented for signature.

7:07 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 applicant's consultant provided an update on revisions made since the last meeting, noting that peer review comments focused on the flood study. The watershed mapping was refined using updated topographic data, with additional drainage areas added. A flood map was submitted shortly before the meeting and received an initial review, with more detailed revisions planned. The applicant stated that updated materials would be submitted for further peer review.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners discussed if the revised watershed mapping fully captures all contributing areas and noted concerns about relying solely on LiDAR data without additional field verification.

- o Questions were raised about flood modeling assumptions, including watershed size, roughness coefficients, and whether the analysis is conservative enough given future development and climate uncertainty.
 - o Commissioners requested clearer support for the model, including running known storm events through the analysis to see if results match observed conditions.
 - o The Commission emphasized the need to receive final peer review comments before making any determinations related to floodplain boundaries and regulatory impacts.
- **Motion:** A motion was made to continue the public hearing.
 - **Vote:** All members voted in favor.
 - **Outcome:** The public hearing was continued to December 23, 2025.

331 Boston Road

- **Proposal:** Request for guidance on a proposed addition to an existing detached garage.
- **Presentation:** The property owner explained plans to add approximately 14-15 feet to the side of an existing 30x40 garage to create covered storage for a motorhome. The addition would be a steel structure supported with a roof and posts, and would replace an existing temporary fabric shelter. The owner requested feedback before ordering materials to confirm the appropriate filing and any wetland-related concerns.
- **Discussion:**
 - o The Commission discussed the location of the proposed addition relative to nearby wetlands and the 100-foot buffer, noting that the addition may extend slightly into the buffer depending on final measurements.
 - o Commissioners noted that permanent structures are generally discouraged within the 100-foot buffer, but that review often includes consideration of mitigation or offsetting benefits.
 - o Drainage and runoff from the new roof area were identified as a key issue that would need to be addressed as part of any filing.
 - o It was discussed that removing the existing temporary shelter closer to the wetland could be considered a benefit.
 - o The Commission agreed that the proposal would be appropriately reviewed under a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA), given the scope of work and foundation type.
- **Outcome:** The applicant was advised to file an RDA showing the proposed addition, wetland boundaries, buffer limits, and drainage details.

2. GENERAL BUSINESS

2.1 GENERAL DISCUSSIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hunting Issues at Parcel 202-83

- **Presentation:** Staff explained that a resident raised concerns about hunting occurring near homes and a vehicle parking near the Water Department access. It was noted that the parcel is surrounded by residential development and that only a small interior area may fall outside the 500-foot setback from residences required under state law. Staff raised the question of whether hunting restrictions should be considered.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners discussed that hunting regulations, including the 500-foot setback and permitted methods, are governed by state law and enforced by state and local authorities, not the Commission.
 - It was clarified that the parcel is owned by the Town, with a Conservation Restriction held by the Commission, and that hunting is generally allowed unless explicitly prohibited by deed, restriction language, or grant conditions.
 - Commissioners expressed that the Commission should not impose additional hunting restrictions and emphasized maintaining consistency with state regulations and cooperative relationships with Fisheries and Wildlife.
 - It was noted that some parcels prohibit hunting only due to donor restrictions or grant conditions, and that many conservation grants require parcels to remain open to hunting.
- **Outcome:** The Commission agreed to take no action to restrict hunting on the parcel. Staff had already responded to the resident explaining applicable state regulations.

Enforcement Order – Old Ayer Rd/Indian Hill Music Center

- **Presentation:** Staff reported that an Enforcement Order was issued the prior week, including a Stop Work Order and a directive to file a retroactive Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA). The property owner has since engaged a consultant, and an RDA is scheduled for the next meeting. Staff also notified the state agency overseeing Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APRs) regarding work occurring on a parcel across the street.
- **Discussion:**
 - The Commission discussed the Enforcement Order scope, confirming it applies to both parcels and requires all work to cease pending review.

- o Members discussed APR jurisdiction and responsibilities, noting the APR was jointly funded by the Town and the state, with primary enforcement authority resting with the state.
- o Questions were raised if certain stone wall construction and land alteration fall within the 100-foot buffer to bordering vegetated wetlands associated with James Brook.
- o Commissioners acknowledged uncertainty regarding the wetland boundaries and agreed that these issues would be clarified through the upcoming RDA review.
- **Outcome:** The Commission will await the retroactive RDA at the next meeting and continue to monitor compliance with the Stop Work Order while allowing the state to take the lead on the APR-related enforcement.

Enforcement Order – 60 Valley Road

- **Presentation:** Staff reported that clearing occurred within a wetland and buffer zone, including areas near a pond in the late summer. An Enforcement Order requiring a restoration plan was issued to the contractor, but the certified letter was returned. The contractor had provided a local address, while the property owner resides out of state.
- **Discussion:**
 - o The Commission confirmed that enforcement responsibility rests with the landowner, regardless of contractor involvement.
 - o Members discussed if additional restoration work could cause further disturbance and agreed this should be evaluated once a formal filing or plan is submitted.
 - o It was noted that recent wetland delineation flagging was observed during a prior site walk, suggesting potential preparatory steps toward compliance.
 - o Commissioners expressed concern that deadlines in the original Enforcement Order were missed and agreed follow-up action is needed.
- **Outcome:** Staff was directed to send a certified enforcement letter to the property owner, similar to the prior notice sent to the contractor, and to follow up on site conditions.

Enforcement Order – 101 Longley Road

- **Presentation:** Staff reported that an Enforcement Order was issued recently. The homeowner responded, met with staff, and installed a silt fence around the affected area. The homeowner indicated an intent to restore an area that had previously been a field and potentially convert it to lawn. Staff directed the homeowner to document the

proposed work in a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA), which is expected on the next agenda.

- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners noted visible soil displacement down the slope into the lower portion of the field.
 - It was confirmed that erosion controls are now in place pending further review.
 - Members acknowledged that the matter will be evaluated formally once the RDA is submitted.
- **Outcome:** The Commission will review the RDA at the next meeting.

2.2 COMMITTEE UPDATES

- A site walk is scheduled for Saturday at 10:00 AM to review management of the Eliades Conservation Area, including recently mowed sections. Commissioners were encouraged to attend the site walk to discuss future management approaches.
- It was reported that sixteen additional sign blanks have been delivered and are currently stored in the shed behind Town Hall.

2.3 LAND MANAGEMENT & ACQUISITION

Review & Approve Stewardship Management Plan for Gibbet Hill

- Staff reported that additional information is needed from the Historical Commission before the plan can be finalized.
 - Review of the Stewardship Management Plan was postponed.
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APPROVE INVOICES

- **Motion:** A motion was made to pay Groton Herald \$65.00 for advertising.
 - **Votes:** The motion 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