



Conservation Commission Meeting
Tuesday, January 13, 2026 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, Peter Morrison, 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 – 210 Indian Hill Road DEP# 169-1212

- **Proposal:** Request for Certificate of Compliance for work completed at 210 Indian Hill Road.
- **Presentation:** The applicant appeared and reported that the project had been completed, including seeding, and that the applicant has been coordinating with a land trust regarding mowing schedules.
- **Discussion:**
 - A Commissioner reviewed the Order of Conditions and identified three items that had not yet been completed or verified: Condition 44 (Meadow Restoration Area), which requires a specific plant community to be started and monitored, the in-perpetuity no-yard-waste condition, and the in-perpetuity open meadow maintenance condition, which restricts mowing to the window of September 15 through May 15.
 - A Commissioner stated that photographs taken in July 2024 showed conservation markers had not yet been placed, and that mowing appeared to have occurred well beyond the 100-foot buffer boundary. A site visit the prior Saturday confirmed that conservation markers had since been placed, but that the mowing pattern suggested the area was being mowed outside the permitted window.

- The applicant stated that a meadow seed mix and wildflower seed had been purchased and applied several years prior, that ticks in the area necessitated regular mowing, and that mowing occurs between mid-May and September. The applicant acknowledged mowing occurs from September and stated a willingness to provide an invoice from the landscaper.
- It was noted that Condition 44 requires written monitoring reports from a professional landscaper to be submitted to the Commission monthly during the first growing season and in June and September. No reports had been submitted.
- Discussion followed regarding whether a Certificate of Compliance could be issued with ongoing conditions.
- Commissioners discussed if listing Condition 44 as an ongoing condition would preserve enforcement authority, with one Commissioner cautioning that the form language may not support enforcement of a restoration condition if challenged.
- It was noted that the applicant has a pending property closing and that withholding the COC could affect the sale timeline. It was also noted that there is no legal prohibition on selling a property without a COC, and that any outstanding conditions would be recorded and run with the land.
- The applicant agreed to provide photographs of yard waste cleanup the following day and to attempt to obtain the landscaper invoice showing the specific seed mix used. It was stated that the new owners have a copy of the Order of Conditions and are familiar with its requirements.
- Commissioner Kuliesis joined the meeting electronically partway through this item. As a result, the remainder of this item was conducted by roll call vote.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to issue a Certificate of Compliance for DEP# 169-1212 with ongoing conditions, specifically that the following conditions of the Order of Conditions should continue, including any conditions contained in the final order such as maintenance or monitoring that should continue for a longer period.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously. (Commissioner Wolfe recused.)
- **Outcome:** A Certificate of Compliance was issued for DEP# 169-1212 with Condition 44 listed as an ongoing condition.

6:40 PM- Continued Public Hearing – Notice of Intent – 63 Gratuity Road DEPP# 169-1281

- **Proposal:** Notice of Intent filed by Routhier & Roper Gratuity Road LLC for the installation of a water line via directional drilling beneath Gratuity Brook.
- **Presentation:** Matt Waterman of LandTech Consultants appeared on behalf of the applicant. He reported that since the prior meeting, two outstanding items had been addressed: the directional drilling plan had been updated to reflect the revised floodplain from Gratuity Brook and the floodplain map had been cleaned up. He stated that peer review comment letters had been received and that the applicant was requesting the hearing be closed and an Order of Conditions be issued.

- **Discussion:**
 - A Commissioner stated that the only items being approved under the Notice of Intent are the two bore pits and the directional drilling of the water line, as well as the determination of the bordering land subject to flooding (BLSF). It was stated that other items shown on the plans, including proposed subdivision lots and houses, are not part of this filing and have not been approved.
 - Mr. Waterman confirmed this, noting that any grading or work on the individual lots would require separate Notices of Intent.
 - Discussion followed on if the Order of Conditions would extend the resource area delineation. It was stated that the existing ANRAD is still valid, that the resource area delineation carries forward with the new Order of Conditions, and that the Order itself would be valid for three years.
 - Desheng Wang, who conducted the independent flood study for the applicant, appeared electronically and confirmed the delineation process and timeline.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to close the public hearing.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously
- **Outcome:** The public hearing was closed. Order of Conditions to be issued.

6:50 PM- Continued Public Hearing – Notice of Intent – Squannacook River Dam
DEP# PENDING

- **Proposal:** Notice of Intent filed by Haley and Aldrich, Inc. for repairs to the Squannacook River Dam.
- **Presentation:** Administrator Steeves reported no new information. It was noted for the public that this filing is for the purpose of obtaining a cost estimate for potential dam removal for presentation at Town Meeting, and that issuance of a permit does not guarantee the dam will be removed.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing to January 27, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The public hearing was continued to January 27, 2026.

6:51 PM: Continued Notice of Intent – Hollingsworth & Vose Landfill Closure
DEP# PENDING

- **Proposal:** Notice of Intent filed by Hollingsworth & Vose Company for closure of an existing landfill.
- **Presentation:** Administrator Steeves reported that the applicant’s representative, Bob Collins, requested a continuance to January 27, 2026.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the matter to January 27, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The matter was continued to January 27, 2026.

7:00 PM: Continued Public Hearing – Retroactive Request for Determination of Applicability – 101 Longley Road (Unpermitted Grading and Work in Buffer Zone)

- **Proposal:** Retroactive Request for Determination of Applicability filed for unpermitted grading and work in the buffer zone at 101 Longley Road.
- **Presentation:** The applicant appeared and described a proposed plan to remediate the disturbed area. The applicant proposed softening and grading the edges of the fill, applying a conservation seed mix containing bluegrass, ryegrass, fescue, and clover, and planting two to three-inch caliper silver maple or red maple trees along the edge of the buffer zone. The applicant stated he intended to source loam locally and that the area had been primarily field grass prior to the unpermitted work.
- **Discussion:**
 - A Commissioner asked what “softening the edges” meant. The applicant stated he intended to pull back fill material to create a more gradual grade and then loam and seed the area.
 - Commissioners encouraged the applicant to explore native seed mixes in consultation with Administrator Steeves, cautioned against importing outside loam due to the risk of introducing invasive species, and expressed a preference for removing fill material and allowing the area to renaturalize
 - It was estimated from site observations that approximately 50 to 100 cubic yards of fill material had been placed within the buffer zone, out of an estimated 500 total cubic yards brought to the site.
 - It was stated that fill extended to approximately 60 to 70 feet from the wetland boundary, within the 100-foot buffer zone, based on measurements taken during a prior site walk.
 - A Commissioner stated that the extent of the restoration work, the need for multi-season monitoring, and the potential for invasive species warranted the filing of a Notice of Intent rather than resolution under the existing RDA.
 - The applicant asked if a middle ground was possible. It was stated that those questions would be more appropriately addressed as part of the Notice of Intent process, once a formal plan is submitted.
 - Administrator Steeves confirmed that a Positive Determination would be required given the circumstances.
 - The applicant was directed not to perform any work within the 100-foot buffer zone until an Order of Conditions has been issued, and was advised to work with Administrator Steeves on the Notice of Intent filing.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to issue a Positive Determination #1, finding that the area described is an area subject to protection under the Act and that removing, filling, dredging, or altering the area requires the filing of a Notice of Intent.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

- **Outcome:** A Positive Determination #1 was issued. The applicant was directed to file a Notice of Intent with Administrator Steeves and to refrain from any work within the 100-foot buffer zone until an Order of Conditions is issued.

7:05 PM: Notice of Intent – 26 Indian Hill Road DEP# PENDING

- **Proposal:** Notice of Intent filed at 26 Indian Hill Road for modifications to an existing single-family residence, including removal of an existing garage, construction of a new garage and addition, septic system relocation, and associated drainage work. A portion of the proposed work falls within the 50-foot and 100-foot buffer zones and the 200-foot riverfront area.
- **Presentation:** Bruce Ringwall of Goldsmith Preston Ringwall appeared on behalf of the applicant. He described the project, noting that the proposed retaining wall would encroach approximately 14 square feet into the 50-foot buffer, with approximately 156-158 square feet of temporary disturbance in that zone. The proposed new septic system would be located outside the 200-foot riverfront on the opposite side of the property. Stormwater management includes Cultec chambers near the road and an infiltration trench along the driveway. Approximately 2,600 square feet of new impervious area is proposed, with some existing impervious area outside jurisdiction to be removed. Tim Hess of Studio InSitu Architects appeared electronically.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioner Lathrop disclosed that Studio InSitu Architects is also the architect for an ongoing renovation of his own residence. He stated he had filed the required disclosure form with the Select Board earlier that day, had not yet received a response, and would participate in discussion only. The applicant's representatives stated they had no objection.
 - It was noted that the substantial extent of proposed permanent structures within the 100-foot buffer zone and stated that meaningful mitigation would be required. It was noted that under the Groton Wetlands Protection Bylaw, the 50-foot zone is a no-touch zone and the 100-foot zone prohibits permanent structures.
 - A Commissioner noted that the existing buffer zone vegetation is heavily disturbed, consisting primarily of invasive honeysuckle and dead ash trees.
 - Discussion followed regarding the fence plan. The proposal would shorten an existing chain-link fence to terminate near the rear corner of the proposed garage, with a gate, for safety reasons related to the pool and the owners' dogs.
 - A Commissioner asked if a permeable driveway surface had been considered. The applicant's representative stated the design relies on subsurface recharge and expressed concern about permeable pavement maintenance.
 - A Commissioner raised the idea of designating a portion of the remaining property as a permanent natural area as mitigation. The applicant's representative stated he would need to discuss options with the property owner.

- Administrator Steeves referenced a prior case in which an applicant returned with successive revised plans that moved work further from resource areas before an agreement was reached.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing to January 27, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The public hearing was continued to January 27, 2026. The applicant was asked to return with a proposal addressing mitigation or design alternatives that reduce the extent of work within the buffer zone.

7:15 PM: Notice of Intent – 70 Dale Lane DEP# 169-1288

- **Proposal:** Notice of Intent filed for construction of a new single-family residence on an undeveloped lot at 70 Dale Lane, including a driveway, detention basin, septic system, and associated site work. A portion of the proposed driveway falls within the 100-foot buffer zone.
- **Presentation:** Chris Mackenzie appeared on behalf of the applicant. He described the project, noting that a driveway easement was obtained from the adjacent property owner to allow the driveway to be constructed parallel to the existing neighboring driveway, extending existing culverts and avoiding direct wetland fill. The proposed house is located entirely outside the 100-foot buffer zone. A detention basin designed for the one-hundred-year storm is proposed outside the 50-foot buffer. A rainwater collection system is also planned at the house.
- **Discussion:**
 - A Commissioner stated that the area around the culvert appears to function as a wet meadow and that the culvert extension may constitute a wetland crossing, which would require the filing to be reclassified as a limited project. It was noted this was also a DEP comment.
 - The applicant's representative stated the wetland delineation does not begin until the upland side of the culvert and that a response letter was submitted to DEP.
 - A Commissioner questioned if alternative driveway routes had been explored. The applicant's representative described multiple design iterations and stated that routing the driveway further from the wetland would require significantly more excavation and tree removal.
 - The property owner stated that a shared driveway arrangement with the adjacent property owner had been explored but declined.
 - A Commissioner raised the possibility of permanently protecting a portion of the wooded upland area as mitigation and suggested minimizing lawn area around the house. The property owner expressed willingness and stated a preference for natural landscaping.

- A Commissioner raised concerns about salt and snow management near the wet meadow. It was suggested that snow storage restrictions could be incorporated into the Order of Conditions.
- A site walk was discussed prior to the January 27 meeting.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded, with the concurrence of the applicant, to continue the public hearing to January 27, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The public hearing was continued to January 27, 2026. A site walk was scheduled prior to the January 27 meeting. The applicant was asked to return with a proposal more definitively addressing preservation commitments for the remainder of the property.

7:15 PM: Order of Conditions – 63 Gratuity Road – DEP# 169-1281

- Matt Waterman of LandTech Consultants rejoined the meeting for this item. The Commission reviewed the proposed Order of Conditions for 63 Gratuity Road.
 - A motion was made and seconded to approve the Order of Conditions for DEP# 169-1281 at 63 Gratuity Road under the Wetlands Protection Act, incorporating the first 19 boilerplate conditions and special conditions 20 through 49 as read into the record, including pre-construction, during-construction, and post-construction requirements.
 - A Commissioner moved to add two findings: (1) that the Commission affirms the bordering land subject to flooding (BLSF) boundary as shown on the approved plan; and (2) that this Order of Conditions applies only to the bordering land subject to flooding determination and the directional drilling infrastructure for the water line, and does not approve any other work shown on the plans, including proposed subdivision lots or houses.
 - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
 - **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the Order of Conditions for DEP# 169-1281 at 63 Gratuity Road under the Groton Wetlands Protection Bylaw, incorporating bylaw conditions 1 through 7 as read into the record, including pre-construction and post-construction requirements.
 - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
 - **Outcome:** Orders of Conditions issued for DEP# 169-1281 at 63 Gratuity Road under both the Wetlands Protection Act and the Groton Wetlands Protection Bylaw. The Order will be mailed or picked up by the applicant or applicant's attorney.
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2. GENERAL BUSINESS

2.1 GENERAL DISCUSSIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Discussion: Fitchs Bridge Road

- A Commissioner described a proposed land arrangement involving a strip of land along the Nashua River near Fitchs Bridge Road. The proposal, initiated by landowner Gary Wilkins, would involve the town obtaining either ownership of or an easement over a strip of land running between the current river channel and what appears to be an old river channel, in exchange for the town discontinuing a portion of Fitchs Bridge Road that currently runs through Wilkins' fields. Under the proposed terms, the discontinued road would become Wilkins' property, but the town would retain an easement for vehicular access to Fitch's Bridge for maintenance purposes, and the public would retain non-motorized access on what is currently Fitchs Bridge Road.
- It was noted that the town recently acquired the adjacent parcel, which would allow for a trail connection from the Farmers & Mechanics parcel through to the Fitchs Bridge area and create a logical trailhead location.
- Commissioners expressed general support for the arrangement. It was noted that this type of opportunity to resolve longstanding land access conflicts is uncommon and should be pursued. The Commission agreed it should act as a champion for the proposal and bring it to the Select Board and Town Manager.
- Discussion followed regarding public access details, including the possibility of a gate or signage at the Gratuity Road end of the discontinued road and the need to ensure public understanding of the non-motorized access rights that would remain.
- Motion: A motion was made and seconded that the Conservation Commission investigate the acquisition of the sliver of land along the edge of the river between the river and the Wilkins property, and the possible swap described above.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The motion carried. It was agreed that a Commissioner would bring the matter to the Town Manager and continue to brief Select Board members who had been informally consulted. The matter will be tracked on the Commission's ongoing issues list.

105 North Woods Road Potential Violation

- Administrator Steeves reported that she had received an anonymous complaint that the residents at 105 North Woods Road have been pushing snow across the road and onto Conservation land, described as a detention basin with beaver activity across the street from the property.
- Administrator Steeves confirmed she drove to the site and observed snow being pushed across the road onto the conservation parcel.
- Discussion followed regarding the best approach. It was agreed that a letter should be sent to nearby property owners noting that stockpiling snow on the conservation land

on the south side of North Woods Road must stop. It was discussed that framing the letter broadly to nearby residents, rather than singling out one property, would be a reasonable approach.

- It was noted that while the exact party responsible is not confirmed, the Commission's letter should make clear that the conservation parcel is town-owned and that snow dumping on it is not permitted.

2.2 COMMITTEE UPDATES

Community Preservation Committee – Request to Appear

- It was reported that the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) met the prior evening. It was noted that a \$700,000 request for playground renovations at the Boutwell School had been submitted by another applicant. It was stated that the Commission should be prepared for the possibility of receiving no funding or reduced funding, and that the Commission should make a strong case for its requests.

2.3 LAND MANAGEMENT & ACQUISITION

Wild and Scenic River Grant

- It was reported that the Stewardship Committee is preparing a grant application under the Wild and Scenic River Grant program to fund invasive species management at Carol Wheeler Park. The Commission is also considering expanding the work to an adjacent MBTA property, which would require additional applicator insurance and formal permission from the MBTA.
- It was reported that Peter Cunningham has been negotiating with MBTA's real estate attorneys regarding permission to perform invasive management on the T property. The attorneys have informally indicated that a \$1,000 go-away fee is not required, but progress has been slow. The Commission agreed to defer to Cunningham's efforts and allow his negotiations to continue.
- It was noted that the maximum Wild and Scenic River Grant award is \$7,500. It was stated that the Commission intends to submit the application.

2.5 APPROVE INVOICE

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Administrator to reimburse Commissioner Lathrop \$180 for the MACC Annual Environmental Conference registration fee.
- **Vote:** All in favor. (Commissioner Lathrop recused.) Motion carried.

- **Outcome:** Invoice approved. It was noted that the MACC Annual Environmental Conference is scheduled for Saturday, February 28, 2026, and that registration is open.

2.6 ONGOING ISSUES

- The Commission reviewed its ongoing issues spreadsheet. Resolved items were noted for transfer to a “done” tab. The following items were discussed as active or requiring follow-up:
 - Nate Nutting Turtle Site: It was discussed whether to schedule a spring site walk to check for disturbance and evaluate signage.
 - Marshall Lewis Baseline Study: Administrator Steeves was asked to confirm whether the baseline report has been completed.
 - Quail Ridge: The homeowner continues to mow conservation land. All equipment has been removed from the site. A site visit was noted.
 - Baddacook Pond Road RDA – tree cutting: It was noted that a follow-up site walk from August 2024 indicated trees had been cut in accordance with the issued Determination of Applicability, with 30-foot snags left in place. This item was discussed as potentially resolved.
 - 87 Maplewood Road: It was noted that a filing may be forthcoming.
 - 30 Birch Lane: Noted for a check-in.
 - Shepley Hill Conservation Restriction: Administrator Steeves was asked to check on the status of a trail easement that was part of a prior planning approval.
 - 101 Longley Road: Enforcement order issued; ongoing.
 - 60 Valley Road: Ongoing.
 - 28 Boathouse Road: The Commission noted the COC with Negative Determination #3 was completed, but that the applicant still needs to complete required native plantings.
 - 210 Indian Hill Road: To remain on the list pending confirmation that mowing is occurring within the permitted window and within the 100-foot buffer.
 - Hill Road lawsuit: It was noted the Commission is awaiting court action.
 - A Commissioner requested that Administrator Steeves also add any properties that received a violation letter during the past year to the ongoing issues list for tracking.

ADJOURNMENT

- The Commission entered Executive Session and did not return to open session.

APPROVED: 4/14/2026