



**Conservation Commission Meeting**  
Tuesday, February 10, 2026 at 6:30 PM  
Groton Electric Light Dept Building,  
23 Station Ave Groton MA  
**OPTION TO JOIN REMOTELY**



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**Present:** Chair: Bruce Easom, Larry Hurley, Olin Lathrop, Ben Wolfe, Peter Morrison, John Smigelski

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

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

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## **1. APPOINTMENTS AND HEARINGS**

### **6:30 PM: Continued Public Hearing – Notice of Intent – 26 Indian Hill Road –**

#### **DEP# 169-1290**

- **Proposal:** Continued public hearing regarding a proposed addition and site modifications within the 100-foot buffer zone and Riverfront Area, including driveway changes, stormwater management, and creation of a naturalized restoration area.
- **Presentation:** Bruce Ringwall of GPR and Matt Killam of Studio One Architects appeared and presented a colored site plan showing the wetland buffer zones, Riverfront Area, setbacks, and buildable area. They described revisions made since the last meeting, including reducing the driveway width, relocating stormwater chambers beneath the driveway, and proposing a naturalized restoration area marked by large boulders.
- **Discussion:**
  - Commissioners stated that the colored plan was helpful in showing the full site and how the project has changed over time.
  - One Commissioner noted that the overall size of the lot is not relevant to the filing but stated that he is more comfortable with the revised plan now that the permanent structures are out of the 50-foot buffer and located in previously disturbed areas within the 100-foot zone. He also stated that the compensation area is substantial and that he supports the use of large boulders to clearly define the restoration boundary.
  - DEP comments regarding certain plant species were discussed. The applicant stated that the plantings are native and appropriate for the site conditions. A

Commissioner stated that the Order of Conditions does not need to specify exact species, provided that the plantings are native and site appropriate.

- Commissioners discussed adding conditions to ensure long-term compliance, including the Commission's right to inspect the restoration area with reasonable notice in perpetuity.
- The need to monitor and address invasive species within the naturalized area was discussed.
- Commissioners also discussed ensuring that the boundary boulders remain in perpetuity. Past instances were referenced where boundary markers were removed after approval. Members discussed adding placards to the boulders and including clear language in the Order of Conditions to prevent removal. The applicant agreed to installing placards and to including language requiring that the boulders remain in place.
- **Motion:** A motion was made to close the public hearing.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The public hearing was closed.

### **6:40 PM: Continued Public Hearing – Request for Determination of Applicability – 716 Martins Pond Road**

- **Proposal:** Request for Determination of Applicability filed for replacement of an existing deck.
- **Presentation:** The contractor appeared and submitted photographs of the existing deck. He explained that the original deck was eight feet wide and that the new footings are flush with the edge of the deck, which is why they are not located in the exact same position as the prior footings.
- **Discussion:**
  - Commissioners stated that the submitted photographs were helpful and clarified that the deck had previously cantilevered beyond the footings.
  - A Commissioner noted that the new footings extend slightly farther toward the lake but described it as a minor encroachment and stated that the photos demonstrated the deck was larger than previously understood. He also referenced the property owners' past stewardship of the property.
  - Commissioners discussed ensuring that the reconstructed deck does not extend beyond the new footings.
  - It was agreed that a condition should require that the deck be constructed in accordance with the submitted plan dated 12/11/2025.
- **Motion:** A motion was made that the work as described is within the buffer zone as defined in the regulations but will not alter an area subject to protection under the Act and therefore does not require the filing of a Notice of Intent, subject to the condition that the deck be constructed per the plan dated 12/11/2025.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

- **Outcome:** The Commission determined that the work does not require the filing of a Notice of Intent, subject to the condition that the deck be constructed per the plan dated 12/11/2025.

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

- **Proposal:** Repairs to the Squannacook River Dam.
- **Presentation:** Staff provided an update that a public meeting will be held on March 3rd at the Senior Center regarding the dam project. Also, at Town Meeting, there will be a vote to repair the dam. If the vote does not pass, the Town will proceed with removal of the dam or evaluate the feasibility of removal.
- **Discussion:**
  - It was stated that the Town will have an estimate of the cost to repair the dam.
  - It was stated that the cost to the Town for removal would be zero, as the project would be funded by DER, with the required 20% match satisfied through design work already completed.
  - Commissioners discussed that the filing should remain open until Town Meeting determines whether the project will proceed as a repair or move toward removal.
  - It was agreed to continue the hearing to the next scheduled meeting.
- **Motion:** A motion was made to continue the public hearing to February 24th.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The hearing was continued to February 24th.

### **6:51 PM: Request for Determination of Applicability – 331 Boston Road**

- **Proposal:** Request for Determination of Applicability filed for an addition to the side of an existing garage.
- **Presentation:** The applicant appeared and stated that he proposes a 15-foot addition to the side of the garage on four sono tubes. He stated that the structure will match the existing building and that the existing tent shown in the photos will be removed once the new structure is complete.
- **Discussion:**
  - Commissioners asked about the location of the wetlands and the 100-foot buffer. It was stated, based on GIS review, that the proposed addition appears to be within the 100-foot buffer zone.
  - Commissioners discussed that permanent structures are not allowed within the 100-foot buffer by bylaw but that mitigation could be considered.
  - The need to address roof runoff was discussed. Commissioners stated that runoff should be infiltrated on site, such as through a French drain, to prevent water from discharging toward the wetlands.

- Commissioners discussed removal of the existing tent structure and stated that the area should remain open in perpetuity.
- It was discussed that the addition should be constructed in accordance with the submitted plan.
- The applicant stated that he is willing to install a French drain and to remove the tent structure as discussed.
- **Motion:** A motion was made that the work as described in the request is within the buffer zone as defined in the regulations but will not alter an area subject to protection under the Act and therefore does not require the filing of a Notice of Intent, subject to the following conditions: sufficient infiltration of all roof runoff on site, removal of the existing tent structure with the area to remain open in perpetuity, and construction of the addition in accordance with the approved plans.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The Commission determined that the work does not require the filing of a Notice of Intent, subject to the stated conditions.

### **7:00 PM: Approve Order of Conditions – 70 Dale Lane – DEP# 169-1288**

- **Proposal:** Review and possible approval of the Order of Conditions for 70 Dale Lane.
- **Presentation:** A motion was made to approve the first 19 boilerplate conditions, pre-construction condition 20, and conditions 21 through 53 as read.
- **Discussion:**
  - A Commissioner stated that in Condition 48, language referencing “exotic species” should be removed to avoid confusion and that plantings should simply be identified as native, non-invasive species.
  - Commissioners discussed Condition 50 regarding the no-cut area and clarified that there are two no-cut areas to be established and protected in perpetuity as shown on the approved plans.
  - It was noted that the approved plan was not available for review during the meeting.
  - Commissioners discussed whether to proceed with approval or wait to confirm the plan details.
- **Motion:** A motion was made to approve the Order of Conditions as read.
- **Vote:** All those in favor indicated by saying aye. The motion failed by unanimous vote.
- **Outcome:** The Order of Conditions was not approved and will be brought back at the next meeting for further review.

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## **2. GENERAL BUSINESS**

### **2.1 GENERAL DISCUSSIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## **Discussion: Conservation Forum**

- **Discussion:**
  - It was stated that the Conservation Forum is an event where all conservation groups in Groton are invited to gather in one place to discuss their work, cross-group cooperation, and shared interests.
  - The next forum will be held on Thursday, March 26th at 6:30 PM at the Senior Center.
  - It was stated that the event has already been scheduled and that the Conservation Commission is being asked to sponsor it.
  - It was stated that Pat Hockery will provide a keynote address, followed by open discussion.
  - Commissioners discussed contributing refreshments and attendance at the event.
- **Motion:** A motion was made that the Conservation Commission sponsor the Conservation Forum on March 26, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The motion passed.

## **7:30PM Discussion: Use of Salt Near Resource Areas**

- **Discussion:**
  - A resident addressed the Commission regarding the use of pure salt on a shared driveway located within a wetland buffer area. She stated that her neighbor had applied 100% salt to the driveway and asked whether any regulations prohibit such use.
  - Staff stated that the original Order of Conditions for the property did not include any restrictions on salt use and that the Town's bylaw does not regulate the application of salt, only stockpiling within resource areas.
  - Commissioners discussed the balance between public safety and environmental impacts, noting that excessive salt use can negatively affect wetlands and amphibians due to increased salinity.
  - It was discussed that road maintenance activities are generally exempt, limiting the Commission's regulatory authority.
  - Commissioners stated that the issue may be more appropriately addressed through deed review or consultation with a land attorney to clarify rights related to the shared driveway.
  - Commissioners discussed the possibility of requiring infiltration of runoff or restricting salt use through a filing, but also noted potential enforcement challenges if the property owner is held responsible for another party's actions.
  - It was suggested that public education may be the most practical approach, including providing information on the Commission's website or through local media.

- The resident stated that the immediate issue has been resolved but expressed interest in broader awareness regarding salt use near wetlands.

## Other

- **Discussion:**
  - A Commissioner asked about the previously approved RDA for 60 Valley Road. It was stated that the approval was for rebuilding the house with a second story on top of the existing foundation.
  - It was stated that the applicant had represented that the foundation would remain and that the new structure would be built within the same footprint.
  - A Commissioner stated that the entire building has since been taken down and rebuilt on the footprint.
  - Commissioners discussed whether the foundation was in fact being retained and whether a new foundation may be required to meet current building code standards.
  - It was suggested that the site be reviewed to confirm what the structure is currently sitting on.

## FY27 CPA Application – Consider Reducing Request for Funding Amount

- **Discussion:**
  - It was stated that CPA met the previous night and that there are significant funding constraints due to the decision to pay off the outstanding debt on the middle school track and the anticipated Cow Pond Brook project.
  - It was stated that the Commission's current request for FY27 funding is \$300,000, which has already been reduced from prior years.
  - Commissioners discussed whether to withdraw the request entirely, noting that doing so could generate goodwill with CPA and potentially benefit future requests.
  - It was discussed that the Commission currently maintains approximately \$1.2 million in its account and that withdrawing the request would not drop the balance below one million dollars.
  - It was stated that in prior years when the Commission reduced or went to zero, larger allocations were received in subsequent years.
- **Motion:** A motion was made to reduce the Commission's FY27 CPA funding request.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The Commission voted to withdraw its FY27 CPA funding request.

## **2.2 COMMITTEE UPDATES**

### Stewardship Committee

- It was reported that work on the mowing plan is progressing slowly.
- It was stated that the Committee had planned to review Elides, but that snow on the ground has delayed that effort.
- No additional updates were reported.

## **2.3 LAND MANAGEMENT & ACQUISITION**

### **Meadowbrook Hunting Issues**

- **Discussion:**
  - It was stated that hunting is generally allowed on Conservation Commission parcels, except for a small number of properties where restrictions were placed by the donor or seller.
  - It was stated that a resident expressed concern about hunting activity in the Meadowbrook area. Staff indicated that based on a review of the parcel, there appears to be very limited area where hunting could occur while remaining 500 feet from an occupied dwelling, as required by state law.
  - Commissioners clarified that the 500-foot requirement applies to occupied dwellings, not property lines.
  - Commissioners discussed whether signage prohibiting discharge would be appropriate but stated that enforcement of hunting regulations falls under state jurisdiction.
  - It was stated that Fish and Game should handle any potential violations and that the Commission should not get involved in enforcement.
  - Commissioners discussed potential future changes to state hunting regulations and noted that the Commission could consider its own regulations on town land if state law changes.
  - It was agreed that no action would be taken at this time.

### **Review Walker Property Monitoring Report**

- **Discussion:**
  - It was stated that there was no formal update, as the report had not yet been fully reviewed by staff.
  - A Commissioner stated that the primary concern identified in the monitoring report was a stockpile placed during water line work that may be encroaching onto Conservation land.
  - It was stated that a site visit had been planned but was delayed due to snow cover.
  - It was noted that the monitoring representative believed the stockpile extends onto Conservation property.

- Commissioners discussed contacting the Water Department regarding the issue, as the project was associated with water line work completed by hired contractors.
- It was stated that the extent of any encroachment could not be confirmed due to snow cover, and that the Water Department should be contacted to review the location of the stockpile.

### **Groton School Trees**

- **Discussion:**
  - It was reported that a call was received from Bob Collins regarding recently cut trees associated with Groton School. It was stated that Groton School periodically hires contractors to maintain the river corridor for crew team use.
  - It may have been the Groton School who performed this work.
  - Commissioners discussed that any such work should be filed with the Commission so that it can be reviewed.
  - It was noted that there had been prior understanding that only fallen material would be removed, not viable trees.
  - It was stated that Bob Collins intends to provide additional information regarding the work.

### **Potential Areas >1 Acre for Controlled Burns – Fire Department**

- **Discussion:**
  - It was stated that the Fire Department asked whether the Commission would like additional land areas burned.
  - Commissioners discussed Nipmuck Meadows as a potential location, including standing dead trees and snags that could be taken down to improve mowing access.
  - It was noted that controlled burns have been conducted in the past and that prior burns were viewed positively.
  - Commissioners discussed the timing of burns, noting that spring conditions between when grass dries and before it turns green are optimal.
  - It was stated that burns are not early enough in the season to address swallowwort, but that there are still benefits to burning.
- **Motion:** A motion was made to allow the Fire Department to burn areas of the open meadow at Nipmuck Meadows.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The Commission approved controlled burns in the open meadow area of Nipmuck Meadows.

### **MACC Spring Conference**

- **Discussion:**
    - It was stated that Chairman Easom, and Commissioner Lathrop have registered for the MACC Spring Conference, which will be held on the last Saturday in February.
    - It was asked whether any other Commissioners plan to attend.
    - It was stated that one of the sessions selected will focus on agricultural implications under the Wetlands Protection Act and local bylaws, a topic the Commission has been discussing over the past year.
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## 2.4 APPROVE MEETING MINUTES

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the November 11, 2025, minutes as amended.
  - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
  - **Outcome:** Motion carried.
  
  - **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the November 25, 2025, minutes as amended.
  - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
  - **Outcome:** Motion carried.
  
  - **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the December 9, 2025, minutes as amended.
  - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
  - **Outcome:** Motion carried.
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## 2.5 APPROVE INVOICES

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to authorize reimbursement of \$62.50 to the Groton Herald.
  - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
  - **Outcome:** The reimbursement will be issued.
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## 2.6 ONGOING ISSUES

### 309 Boston Road – Draft Correspondence

- **Discussion:**
    - It was stated that a draft letter is being prepared regarding 309 Boston Road, where fines were previously paid.
    - It was discussed that the letter references the Order issued requiring submission of a plan showing the location and size of trees cut near the wetland.
    - Commissioners noted that the correct date of the Order must be confirmed from the record.
    - It was suggested that certain wording in the draft be revised, including replacing “anxious” with language indicating the Commission is eager to resolve the matter.
    - It was discussed that further review and edits may be completed offline before returning with a finalized draft.
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## ADJOURNMENT

- At 9:05PM the laptop that was running the meeting ran out of battery and the meeting was adjourned.

APPROVED: 2/24/2026