



**Conservation Commission Meeting**  
Tuesday, April 14, 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, Olin Lathrop, Peter Morrison, John Smigelski

**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

### Discussion – Purple Loosestrife Biocontrol Project – Wild and Scenic Stewardship Council

- **Proposal:** Marisa Browning-Kamins of the Nashua River Watershed Association, representing the Wild and Scenic Stewardship Council, gave a presentation regarding a purple loosestrife biocontrol project.
- **Presentation:** Marisa Browning-Kamins of the Nashua River Watershed Association, representing the Wild and Scenic Stewardship Council, presented a proposal to collect ten purple loosestrife plants from local wetlands for a biocontrol project. The beetles would be reared on the plants and released at locations in the community to create a sustainable biocontrol population. She stated that the plants would be selectively dug up with shovels with minimal disturbance, and that the organization already has a permit to house the plants at the NRWA facility. The beetles are expected to arrive in mid-May, with release planned for July. She stated that care would be taken not to spread seeds during the process. She requested recommendations from the Commission on locations where loosestrife could be collected.
- **Discussion:**
  - Commissioner Lathrop suggested several sites for collection: the north side of Martin's Pond Road near the power line crossing and the Pacer Way parcel where loosestrife has moved in after phragmites management.
  - Commissioner Morrison asked what would happen with the plants after the beetles were released. The presenter explained two methods: placing the potted plants back in the wetland temporarily to allow passive beetle release and then

removing and destroying the plant material, or removing the beetles from the plants and then solarizing the loosestrife under black plastic for seven to ten days until dead. She confirmed the plants would be destroyed in either case.

- Commissioner Morrison also asked about the success of prior efforts, and was informed that the previous effort she was aware of was in 2012 and was reported as successful, though mapping at the time was limited. She stated she is conducting interviews with participants from the prior effort and plans to use the EDDMapS database for tracking.
  - Commissioner Smigelski asked how the beetles are transported. The presenter explained the beetles would arrive via overnight shipping and be placed on potted loosestrife plants covered with netting until ready for release.
  - Commissioner Hurley described extensive purple loosestrife on his property, and offered his property as a source for plants and a potential release site.
  - Chair Easom noted that the prior release seemed to be successful.
  - Commissioner Lathrop requested that the Commission be informed ahead of time about where plants would be collected so that any public inquiries could be answered.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to encourage the Wild and Scenic Stewardship Council to harvest purple loosestrife from conservation land for the purpose of rearing biocontrol beetles.
  - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
  - **Outcome:** The Commission authorized the collection. The presenter will coordinate with the Administrator on site selection.

### **6:30 PM: Request for Determination of Applicability – Groton Country Club Irrigation System – 94 Lovers Lane**

- **Proposal:** Request for Determination of Applicability for the Groton Country Club irrigation system at 94 Lovers Lane.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the matter to April 28, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The matter was continued to April 28, 2026.

### **6:45 PM: Request for Certificate of Compliance – 16 West Main Street DEP# 169-1282**

- **Proposal:** Request for Certificate of Compliance for 16 West Main Street.
- **Presentation:** The applicant's representative appeared remotely. He reported that at the prior meeting, the Commission declined to issue a Certificate of Compliance due to insufficient ground cover around the pool area and an outstanding question regarding a pool fence waiver. He stated he had spoken with the property owners about the backyard disturbance and reported that the dirt piles in the buffer zone were left by the

pool installer, and that the property owners' children had cleared vegetation and debris from the area unknowingly. He stated the property owner had not realized the work required Commission approval because it was within the buffer zone. He presented a proposed remediation plan involving a native pollinator meadow planting in the disturbed buffer zone area. The plan would include removing debris and stockpile materials, regrading to match existing contours, scarifying soil for infiltration, installing erosion controls, and seeding with a native New England pollinator mix. He noted that the property owner had already obtained seed mix from Ernst Seed Company that he found appropriate for the site. Species would include little bluestem, switchgrass, Virginia wild rye, goldenrods, asters, milkweed, and black-eyed Susans. Shrub plantings near the wetland edge would include highbush blueberry and other berry-producing species for wildlife habitat. He stated the pollinator meadow would act as a vegetative buffer for stormwater flows toward the wetland. Regarding the pool fence, he stated he is waiting for documentation from the pool installer showing that a waiver was granted by the state based on the pool having an automatic safety cover in lieu of a full perimeter fence.

- **Discussion:**

- Commissioner Hurley stated he supported the pollinator meadow concept but wanted to see established ground cover in the pool area and documentation of the fence waiver before a Certificate of Compliance could be issued.
- Commissioner Morrison asked if the backyard disturbance resulted from the pool construction, and the representative stated that the stockpile material came from the pool installation, but the clearing was done by the property owners. He discussed several options for handling the matter, including a field change modification to the existing Order of Conditions, an enforcement action, or a separate filing.
- Commissioner Lathrop disagreed with combining the matters. He stated the backyard disturbance was a separate action well beyond anything necessary for the pool construction and should require a separate filing. He stated that the Commission's rules only allow approval of minor changes where there is no additional impact to the wetlands or buffer, and that standard was not met. He also expressed concern about disturbance within the 50-foot buffer zone.
- Chair Easom stated his preference for a separate filing as well, noting the backyard work was not discussed in the original filing. He suggested issuing the Certificate of Compliance for the pool work once the ground cover is established and the fence documentation is provided, and treating the buffer zone disturbance as a separate matter.

- The property owner stated that the pool has an automatic safety cover that was approved by the state in lieu of a fence, and offered to work with the Conservation Administrator on plant species selection.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded that the Commission consider the work presented as part of DEP# 169-1282 as an amended Order of Conditions, as a non-binding guidance vote.
- **Vote:** Three in favor (LH, JS, PM), two opposed (OL, BE). Motion carries.
- **Outcome:** The vote shows the Commission's preliminary preference to allow the applicant to file a request for amendment to the existing Order of Conditions.
- After the vote, the homeowners spoke to the Commission and stated that they want to see things stable, and that they would like to work with them to learn about appropriate plantings.

### **7:00 PM: Request for Certificate of Compliance – 401 Old Ayer Road DEP# 169-1285**

- **Proposal: Request for Certificate of Compliance for work completed at 401 Old Ayer Road.**
- **Presentation:** The applicant's representative appeared remotely. He stated that an as-built compliance plan confirmed the septic system was installed in accordance with the plans approved by the Commission and the Board of Health.
- **Discussion:**
  - Commissioners Hurley, Morrison, Smigelski, and Chair Easom had conducted a site walk. Commissioner Hurley reported two minor issues: the silt fence and wattles were still in place and needed to be removed, and there was a soil compaction issue around the tanks that needed to be settled.
  - Commissioner Morrison stated the site looked excellent and that it appeared as though nothing had ever happened there. He noted the granite vent post was particularly well done. He stated he was ready to sign off, contingent on the administrator verifying the compaction and silt fence removal.
  - The Administrator stated that she had visited the site a few weeks prior and recommended keeping the wattle in place at that time because the area had not yet stabilized. She noted the area appeared to have stabilized since her visit.
  - The homeowner appeared remotely and confirmed she could relay the information to her husband.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to issue a Certificate of Compliance contingent upon Administrator review and approval of the soil compaction issue and removal of the silt fence and wattles.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

- **Outcome:** Certificate of Compliance to be issued upon Administrator verification of the two outstanding items.

### **7:20 PM: Continued Public Hearing – Cow Pond Brook Playing Fields – DEP # 169-1291**

- **Proposal:** Notice of Intent filed by the Town of Groton for renovations to Cow Pond Brook Park, including parking improvements, accessible pathways, relocation of a youth baseball field, addition of athletic lighting, and associated stormwater management.
- **Discussion:**
  - The Conservation Administrator reported that the Commission is waiting to see the draft Conservation Management Permit from the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP). She stated she would be attending a meeting with NHESP on Friday to review the project and would report back to the Commission. She noted there were still outstanding items related to lighting timing and that a draft Order of Conditions had been prepared but would need to be amended.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing to April 28, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The public hearing was continued to April 28, 2026.

### **7:35 PM: Request for Determination of Applicability- 245 Gay Road**

- **Proposal:** Request for Determination of Applicability filed for deck replacement and staircase modification at 245 Gay Road.
- **Presentation:** The applicant's contractor appeared before the Commission. Commissioners Morrison, Hurley, Smigelski, and Chair Easom had conducted a site walk. The contractor stated the project involves maintaining the same footprint for the existing deck, and that the only change is converting the far side staircase from a straight stair to an L-shaped stair with a landing to meet building code, similar to the existing driveway side staircase. The deck boards are pervious with gaps for rainwater to pass through.
- **Discussion:**
  - Commissioner Morrison reported that the deck may or may not be replaced in its entirety, depending on the builder's assessment of the existing structure. All replacement would be in the same location with the same footprint. The only change would be the stair modification on the far side.
  - Commissioner Hurley noted that the landing and turn would remain on the existing stone and would not extend the footprint beyond previously disturbed area.
  - Commissioner Lathrop was not on the site walk and initially noted the filing lacked a larger context drawing. After reviewing aerial imagery and hearing

from the other Commissioners and the contractor, he stated he did not have a problem with the project.

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to issue a Negative 3 Determination of Applicability, finding that the work in the request is within the buffer zone as defined in the regulations, but that it will not alter an area subject to protection under the Act. Therefore, the work does not require the filing of a Notice of Intent.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** A Negative 3 Determination of Applicability issued.

### **7:45 PM: Discussion – Snow Mobiles and Winter Maintenance of Trails**

- **Proposal:** Discussion regarding a proposal by the Paugus Snow Trackers snowmobile club to access conservation land for snowmobile use and trail maintenance.
- **Presentation:** Two members of the Paugus Snow Trackers appeared before the Commission, explaining that their club is a revival of a snowmobile club from the 1970s and 1980s and has been officially voted into the Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts. He stated the club is primarily seeking access to parcels under power lines. He described the benefits as including trail maintenance, potential for state grants for bridge building, and winter grooming that would also benefit cross-country skiers, snowshoers, and winter hikers. The club secretary for the Lunenburg Snow Riders appeared remotely and reported that the Lunenburg club has raised approximately \$205,000 in recreational trail grant funds since 2010 and donates 200 to 300 hours of trail stewardship annually. She stated the club has built bridges, parking areas, trailhead kiosks, and footbridges, and assists with Earth Day events, trail cleanups, and ADA parking improvements. The Chair of the Lunenburg Conservation Commission also appeared remotely and spoke in support of the Lunenburg Snow Riders, describing them as excellent trail stewards who help with accountability, signage, and grant writing.
- **Discussion:**
  - Commissioner Morrison asked about potential conflicts between snowmobilers and cross-country skiers. It was reported that the club has not had issues on conservation land and described the club's approach to policing members, including revoking passes and roping off trail sections when necessary.
  - Commissioner Hurley expressed general support and recommended the club connect with the Trails Committee to understand the existing trail network.
  - Commissioner Lathrop stated he would be willing to allow snowmobiles with certain restrictions. He stated the current policy prohibits all motorized vehicles on conservation land. He expressed concern about noise and fossil fuel emissions and stated he would prefer a policy allowing only non-fossil fuel powered snowmobiles. He suggested using DCR standards for minimum snow depth.
  - Chair Easom stated there may be a possibility for the club to operate on conservation land. He recommended the club meet with the Trails Committee

and noted that the Commission's main concern regarding conservation land would be wetland crossings. He suggested the Groton Conservation Trust and New England Forestry Foundation also be included in any joint meeting, as they are major landowners in town.

- Commissioner Smigelski, a forest steward for New England Forestry Foundation, offered to connect with the club.
- Commissioners discussed speed limits and enforcement. It was stated that the Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts works closely with environmental enforcement and that establishing an official trail network would improve enforcement over the current unregulated situation.
- **Outcome:** No vote was taken. The Commission directed the club to coordinate with the Administrator to organize a joint meeting with the Trails Committee, the Groton Conservation Trust, and New England Forestry Foundation to continue the discussion.

### **8:00 PM: Continued Public Hearing – Notice of Intent – Squannacook River Dam** **DEP# PENDING**

- **Proposal: Notice of Intent filed by Haley & Aldrich for repairs to the Squannacook River Dam.**
- **Discussion:**
  - Commissioner Morrison read the legal notice. The Conservation Administrator stated there was no update and recommended continuing to await the outcome of the town meeting vote on the warrant article.
  - Chair Easom raised the question of whether the Commission should take a formal position on the town meeting warrant article to fund repair of the Squannacook River Dam. He stated he had been telling people the Commission had not taken a position because of the open public hearing and asked the Commission to confirm that approach.
  - Commissioner Morrison stated he would not want to take a formal position with the open public hearing, citing the risk of appearing to be gaming the system if the Commission supported dam removal and later denied the repair permit.
  - Commissioner Lathrop acknowledged the concern but noted the Commission is viewed by the public as having conservation expertise. He suggested Commissioners could speak to conservation science issues without taking a formal position.
  - Commissioner Morrison raised a question about the Mullin Rule, noting the hearing has been continued for a long period. The Administrator was asked to review the attendance records.
  - Chair Easom stated he would encourage individual Commissioners to speak at town meeting in their personal capacity to help inform voters, but did not believe the Commission as a body should take a position.

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded that the Commission take a position on Article 11 (repair of the Squannacook River Dam).
- **Vote:** All opposed. Motion failed unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The Commission will not take a formal position on the town meeting warrant article. Individual Commissioners were encouraged to speak at town meeting in their personal capacity.

### **8:01 PM: Continued Public Meeting – Request for Determination of Applicability – 25 Whitney Pond Road**

- **Proposal:** A Request for determination of Applicability for 25 Whitney Pond Road.
- **Presentation:** The applicant appeared before the Commission and presented updated drawings showing proposed additional structures and a mitigation planting plan. The applicant described the addition of native plants selected from a recommended native plant resource. The planting plan was developed in coordination with the Commission’s prior request for mitigation in exchange for the additional construction. The applicant also described the installation of curbing at the top of the driveway to address a water runoff issue and reported that the engineered drainage system is functioning well. The applicant stated the plants would be native species, many purchased from the local Garden Club.
- **Discussion:**
  - Commissioner Lathrop noted the plan proposed additional structures in exchange for native plantings as mitigation. He stated the basic concept was good and requested that all plants be native.
  - Commissioner Morrison stated the addition and the curbing at the top would help and that he liked the plan.
  - Commissioner Hurley and Chair Easom expressed support for the plan. Chair Easom stated he was pleased to hear the drainage system was working.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to issue a Negative 3 Determination of Applicability, finding that the work described in the request is within the buffer zone but will not alter an area subject to protection under the Act.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Negative 3 Determination of Applicability issued with conditions.

## **2. GENERAL BUSINESS**

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

#### **Discussion: Follow up on 0 Hill Road – Nutile Parcel**

- Administrator Steeves reported that Mr. Nutile's son had previously agreed to clean up the parcel and had removed several truckloads of tires and other debris. She reported that the son had recently injured his back and had not been able to continue the work. She noted the Board of Health is also sending a letter.
- Commissioner Lathrop recommended inviting the son to a meeting to provide a formal status update. Chair Easom agreed, stating the public has an interest in the progress and that a public meeting would allow the Commission to demonstrate it is monitoring the situation.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to request the son appear at a future meeting to provide a status update on the cleanup of the parcel.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

## 2.2 COMMITTEE UPDATES

### Town Forest Committee

- This item was briefly addressed earlier when time was available.
- Chair Easom reported on a meeting held the prior Wednesday with the Town Forest Committee, Paul Funch, and representatives of Fish and Wildlife, including Pat Huckery and staff from the Ayer District Office. Fish and Wildlife holds the conservation restriction on the town forest. The group discussed a stand of diseased red pines near the parking lot entrance that are dropping limbs and have a beetle infestation, and it was generally agreed that these should be removed. Fish and Wildlife also presented a map of the trail network with 200- to 250-foot buffers around each trail, showing that very few areas in the town forest fall outside that distance. Fish and Wildlife recommended considering the closure of some parallel or redundant trails to create more undisturbed habitat for sensitive bird species. No conclusion was reached, but the discussion was productive.

### Stewardship Committee

- Commissioner Lathrop reported that the Stewardship Committee conducted a site walk on the Eliades field, particularly the back parcel near Smith Street, to evaluate if mowing should continue. The Committee could not determine what plants were growing because the area had recently been mowed and the woody growth could not be identified. The Committee will revisit when growth resumes.
- A site walk was also conducted at Noonan Woods. The Committee found items of interest including a hunting stand.
- Commissioner Lathrop reported attending an event regarding a Nipmuc land acknowledgement. A representative of the Nipmuc tribe described the concept, but the details remained vague. Other individuals are leading the initiative and the process is

expected to be slow. It is not yet clear what action, if any, the Commission would need to take.

### **Sargisson Beach**

- Commissioner Hurley reported on a recent meeting regarding Sargisson Beach. The group is scheduling the annual cleanup and dock installation. He stated he is following up with DPW on the status of cameras that had been installed but they required repair due to a wiring issue.

### **Williams Barn**

- Chair Easom reported that the Williams Barn is about to go out to bid for interior repair work using CPA historic funds, with some exterior eave replacement also included. He stated the farmers market is expected to begin around July 2.

### **Community Preservation Committee**

- Chair Easom noted the Commission had withdrawn its CPA request. He stated the two major warrant articles of concern to the Commission are the Cow Pond Brook Playing Fields and the Squannacook River Dam repair, both of which involve open filings before the Commission.

## **2.3 LAND MANAGEMENT & ACQUISITION**

### **Sign Shepley Hill Conservation Restriction**

- Commissioner Smigelski reported he had gotten two granite bounds donated to the Commission, approximately eight by eight inches and two and a half feet long, which he can drill for pin markers.
- Chair Easom displayed the boundary plan approved by the Planning Board for the Shepley Hill subdivision. He stated the Planning Board had agreed with the applicant to substitute wooden posts for granite bounds along portions of the conservation restriction boundary, despite the Commission's prior letter requesting granite bounds throughout.
- Commissioners expressed concerns about the ability to monitor the conservation restriction with wooden posts, which would deteriorate over time. Commissioner Morrison stated wooden posts would rot within a few years and the Commission would have no way to identify boundaries for monitoring. Commissioner Lathrop stated the boundary line has approximately 39 changes in direction in the upper portion alone,

making it extremely difficult to monitor even with permanent markers. Commissioner Hurley raised similar concerns about the irregular boundary shape.

- Chair Easom stated the boundary configuration was not monitorable and that this case was a clear reason for the Commission to refuse acceptance of the conservation restriction.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to not accept the conservation restriction for the Shepley Hill development.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The Commission voted to not accept the conservation restriction. Administrator Steeves will inform the Planning Board liaison. Commissioners suggested inviting the applicant to walk the boundaries to understand the monitoring challenges.

### **Parcel 129-138 off Mountain Lakes Trail**

- Commissioners Easom, Morrison, and Hurley visited the parcel on Saturday. Commissioner Morrison reported they found minimal evidence of encroachment: tire tracks indicating past equipment storage, two legs of a sawhorse, and part of a surfboard, but no significant violation was observed. Chair Easom recommended sending a friendly letter as a first step.

## **2.4 APPROVE MEETING MINUTES**

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from January 13, 2026, as amended.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from January 27, 2026, as amended.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
  
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from February 24, 2025, as amended.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

## **2.5 APPROVE INVOICE**

- **Motion:** A motion was made to authorize the Conservation Administrator to pay the Groton Herald a total of \$166.25 for three invoices (\$62.50, \$66.25, and \$37.50).
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Motion:** A motion was made to reimburse Commissioner Morrison \$12.39 for expenses at Country Farm.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

## 2.6 ONGOING ISSUES

- Chair Easom stated the ongoing issues list should be moved earlier in the agenda at future meetings. The Commission reviewed the ongoing issues spreadsheet:
- Wilkins Land Swap: The Conservation Administrator reported the matter is stalled due to a family dispute between two branches of the Wilkins family. Commissioner Lathrop offered to follow up with Gary Wilkins Jr.
- 54 Hill Road: The lawsuit is being reviewed by the court, with a determination expected in the summer.
- 309 Boston Road: The property owner has not responded to the Commission's prior letter and invitation to appear. The Conservation Administrator reported he has been complaining to the police about the Commission's enforcement actions.
  - **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to issue a \$300 fine to the property owner at 309 Boston Road for failure to submit the required paperwork as required by the enforcement order.
  - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- Chair Easom stated he would assist with filing the fine paperwork with the clerk of the court.
- Additional items reviewed briefly:
  - Nate Nutting turtle site – site walk to be scheduled.
  - Baseline Marsh Lewis study – Woodman Inc. has not started work, the Commission recommended withdrawing the contract and reissuing it.
  - Quail Ridge encroachment – to be monitored when mowing season begins.
  - 690 Martin's Pond Road – the Commission will request a site walk on their own land and invite the property owner to meet at the boundary.
  - Groton Hill Music Center stone wall – work observed in progress.
  - 16 West Main Street – noted as being addressed through the ongoing COC process.

---

## ADJOURNMENT

- A motion was made and seconded to adjourn open session. All in favor. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned.

APPROVED: 4/28/2026