



**Conservation Commission Meeting**  
Tuesday, April 28, 2026 at 6:30 PM  
Town Hall: Second Floor Meeting Room  
173 Main Street Groton, MA  
**OPTION TO JOIN REMOTELY**



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

**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.

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## 1. APPOINTMENTS AND HEARINGS

### **6:30 PM: Follow up on 0 Hill Road- Nutile parcel (211-83.1)**

- **Proposal:** Follow-up discussion regarding ongoing cleanup of the Nutile parcel at 0 Hill Road.
- **Presentation:** Joe Nutile, son of the property owner Paul Nutile, appeared before the Commission. He reported that his father had fallen recently and was unable to attend. He stated that cleanup is continuing, with small items such as tires and old culverts being removed by pickup truck. He noted that the larger equipment items, such as tractors and hay balers, are farther from the wetland area and that they have been working from the wetland side outward.
- **Discussion:**
  - Commissioner Lathrop stated he was satisfied with the ongoing progress and asked for an estimated completion date. Mr. Nutile stated he could not commit to a timeline. Commissioner Lathrop stated that as long as continuous loads are being removed, he would be satisfied.
  - Commissioner Kuliesis stated she was in agreement with continued progress and suggested making headway on larger pieces during the drier season.
  - Commissioner Morrison stated he was satisfied with the progress being made.
  - Commissioner Lathrop recommended scheduling a site walk to document progress and collect photographic evidence, noting the Commission has received public inquiries about the parcel. Mr. Nutile stated he would need to discuss that with his father.
- **Outcome:** The Commission agreed to schedule a site walk after Mr. Nutile speaks with his father, and then follow up after the walk.

### **6:40 PM: Request for Determination of Applicability- Groton Country Club Irrigation System- 94 Lovers Lane**

- **Proposal:** Request for Determination of Applicability filed by the Groton Country Club for a new pump station and irrigation system.
- **Presentation:** A representative of the Groton Country Club appeared with the Golf Course Superintendent. The representative stated the project involves installing a new pump station on the left side of the eighth hole, approximately 85 feet from the edge of the water, within the 100-foot buffer zone.
- **Discussion:**
  - Commissioner Morrison stated he had no concerns and that the project appeared self-contained with no detriment to the pond.
  - Commissioner Smigelski recommended placing hay bales or similar erosion controls during installation and keeping the work area clean.
  - Commissioner Kuliesis stated the project appeared to have a net positive for the town and that she was in favor.
  - Commissioner Lathrop, who was unable to attend the site walk, asked several questions about the project. He noted that installing a permanent structure within the 100-foot buffer is contrary to the bylaw, but stated he could support the project if the old pump station area is renaturalized. He also asked about an intake pipe going to the pond and was told it rests on the surface and the system is purged in winter. He asked about debris visible in the photographs and was told it would be removed.
  - Commissioner Hurley stated he was satisfied with the project and noted the irrigation line installation process is minimally invasive.
  - Commissioner Wolfe stated he supported Commissioner Lathrop's suggestion to remove the old pump house and allow the area to naturalize.
  - Administrator Steeves summarized two proposed conditions: remove the old pump house and renaturalize that area, and remove any trash and debris including a damaged shed near the new pump house location.
- **Motion:** A motion was made to issue a Negative 3 Determination of Applicability, finding that the work 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. Therefore, said work does not require the filing of a Notice of Intent, subject to the following conditions: (1) remove the damaged shed, and (2) renaturalize the original pump house area once it is taken offline.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Negative 3 Determination of Applicability issued with conditions.

### **6:55 PM: Request for Determination of Applicability- 235 Hill Road**

- **Proposal:** Request for Determination of Applicability filed by for tree removal.
- **Presentation:** The applicant appeared before the Commission and described a plan to remove several trees behind the house that pose a risk of falling on the structure during storms. He stated that no equipment would go near the stream.
- **Discussion:**
  - Commissioner Wolfe, who attended the site walk, stated the trees were clearly marked and the applicant gave a thorough tour.
  - Commissioner Lathrop requested that at least four snags be left at a height of 15 to 20 feet, noting that snags shorter than the distance to the house cannot cause damage and provide valuable habitat. The applicant agreed.
- **Motion:** Commissioner Morrison moved to issue a Negative 3 Determination of Applicability, finding that the work 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. Therefore, said work does not require the filing of a Notice of Intent, subject to the condition that at least four snags be left.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Negative 3 Determination of Applicability issued with conditions.

### **7:05 PM: Retroactive Notice of Intent- 101 Longley Road DEP# PENDING**

- **Proposal:** Retroactive Notice of Intent filed for earth removal and grading work within the buffer zone.
- **Presentation:** The applicant appeared before the Commission. He stated he had submitted a plan to Administrator Steeves showing the proposed restoration, including pulling material back to the 100-foot buffer, regrading to match the slope, reloaning the area, planting native trees (red maples), and seeding with a conservation mix. He stated he is waiting on a DEP file number and has been unable to get a response from DEP despite multiple contacts. The Administrator Steeves displayed an overlay plan showing the property boundaries, the 50-foot and 100-foot buffer lines, and the proposed restoration area.
- **Discussion:**
  - Commissioner Lathrop stated the plan was reasonable in concept but noted it was somewhat sketchy. He asked about the relationship between the 50-foot and 100-foot buffers and the stream alignment. He agreed with the proposed approach but stated the Commission must wait for DEP input.
  - Commissioner Morrison asked what measurement point is being used. The applicant confirmed measurements are taken from the top of bank.
  - Commissioner Hurley stated the Commission would like to see the material sloped back from the 100-foot buffer. He noted nothing can proceed within the buffer until a DEP number is received.
  - The Conservation Administrator confirmed the applicant may proceed with work outside the 100-foot buffer.

- The applicant asked whether he could begin work immediately upon receiving the DEP number. Chair Easom stated the public hearing must be closed and an Order of Conditions issued first, followed by a ten-day appeals period, but that the Commission could pre-draft the Order of Conditions to expedite the process.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing to May 12, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The public hearing was continued to May 12, 2026.

### **7:15 PM: Notice of Intent- 91 Chicopee Row DEP# PENDING**

- **Proposal:** Notice of Intent filed for construction of a single-family home with work in the buffer zone.
- **Presentation:** A representative of Norse Environmental Services appeared with the applicant. She reported that following a site visit, the plans were significantly revised. The house was moved from approximately half within the 100-foot buffer zone to 98 feet from the bordering vegetated wetland, with only approximately two square feet of the structure within the buffer. The revised plans also include a 50-foot no-disturb zone, no retaining walls, and a septic system that fits the revised layout. She stated the applicant is awaiting a DEP file number.
- **Discussion:**
  - Commissioner Hurley praised the revision as a significant and positive change. He recommended cleaning up trash, invasives, and a shed on the property.
  - Commissioner Smigelski stated he had difficulty with the original plan and was glad the house was moved.
  - Commissioner Wolfe requested more clarity on what "clean it up" means in practice, noting concern that removing the shed and disturbing the area could worsen invasive species.
  - Commissioner Lathrop stated the two square feet in the buffer did not concern him but asked why the house was not shifted another foot to be entirely outside the buffer. He raised concerns about grading within the 100-foot buffer and proposed as mitigation that the area below approximately the 92-foot contour be maintained with native plantings only, with no manicured lawn, fertilizer, or non-native grasses. The applicant's representative stated she liked the wildflower mix idea and would discuss it with the client.
  - Commissioner Kuliesis stated she was not on the site walk but agreed with the need for clarity around conditions.
  - Chair Easom stated he was comfortable with the two-foot overhang into the buffer, supported the native plantings on the downslope, and recommended removal of the shed.
  - Commissioner Smigelski stated the invasives on the property can be handled with the right equipment.

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing to May 12, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The public hearing was continued to May 12, 2026. The applicant agreed to consider native planting and invasive management conditions.

### **7:25 PM: Request for Certificate of Compliance- J. Harry Rich State Forest Trail Project DEP # 169-1269**

- **Proposal:** Request for Certificate of Compliance for the J. Harry Rich State Forest Trail Project.
- **Presentation:** Commissioners who attended the site walk on Saturday reported on the project.
- **Discussion:**
  - Commissioner Hurley stated the trail project came out very well. He stated he was happy to issue the Certificate of Compliance.
  - Commissioner Wolfe agreed the trail was beautiful. All other Commissioners expressed satisfaction with the completed project.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to issue a Certificate of Compliance for the J. Harry Rich State Forest Trail Project.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Certificate of Compliance issued.

### **7:30 PM: Briefing Session of Open Space and Recreation Plan**

- **Proposal:** Briefing session for prospective bidders on the request for proposals (RFP) for updating the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP).
- **Presentation:** The Conservation Administrator stated the OSRP was last updated in 2018 and is due for renewal. The RFP was sent to approximately 32 parties who expressed interest, with bids due May 14 at noon. The state requires an updated OSRP to apply for grant programs, and the plan is also used in CPC applications. The update would be funded from the Groton Conservation Fund.
- **Discussion:**
  - Chair Easom stated that the link to this briefing session and answers to all questions raised should be provided directly to all 32 parties to ensure equal access to information.
  - Commissioner Lathrop reviewed the RFP document and noted several items: a reference to "2019" that should be "2026", the plan validity period is seven years (not five as referenced in the document), and deliverables should be in editable format (Microsoft Word) rather than PDF only, so that future updates can be made without the original vendor. He also requested that any images embedded in documents be provided separately at full resolution. Chair Easom agreed these should be part of the deliverable requirements.

- Adam DeShano of BSC Group asked about the funding source and amount. Chair Easom stated the funding comes from the Groton Conservation Fund (approximately \$1.3 million available), that no specific amount has been set aside, and that expenditures require a majority vote of the Commission without needing town meeting approval.
- Brian Creamer of Nitsch Engineering asked about the approval process. Chair Easom stated the Commission would make a recommendation to the Town Manager, who has final decision authority. Commissioner Lathrop noted that while the Town Manager has the final decision, the Commission controls the funding. Chair Easom stated that in 20 years of experience there has never been a disagreement between the two.
- Mr. Creamer asked about deliverable formats. Administrator Steeves stated the town would like GIS shapefiles, photographs, and spreadsheets with acreage data in addition to the editable Word document. Chair Easom stated that the Town of Groton would need to be the owner of the deliverables.
- Mr. Creamer asked about the timeline. Chair Easom stated the current plan expiration is not a hard deadline as long as any pending grant applications note the plan is in progress.
- Peter Flinker, appearing electronically, asked about priorities beyond the plan renewal requirement. Commissioner Lathrop stated the primary purpose is eligibility for grants. Chair Easom noted the value of coordination with the state-level SCORP. Administrator Steeves stated the plan should reflect the town's increased protected land.
- The Conservation Administrator read questions submitted by Krista Moravik of the Horsley Witten Group and provided answers, including: the OSRP should follow the 2025 DCS workbook (not the 2008 version referenced in error in the RFP), Phase 2 implementation involves assembling the final report after public input and obtaining plan approval, the consultant should participate in meetings of an advisory committee to be formed after vendor selection, and cultural and historic resources are highlighted because Groton's historic district and agricultural preservation restrictions overlap with protected open space.
- **Outcome:** Administrator Steeves will compile all questions and answers and distribute them to all parties who received the RFP.

**8:00 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.
- **Presentation:** No representative from the project appeared. The Conservation Administrator stated the applicant is requesting a continuance.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing to May 12, 2026.

- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The public hearing was continued to May 12, 2026.

### **8:15 PM: Continued Public Hearing- Notice of Intent - Squannacook River Dam- DEP# PENDING**

- **Proposal:** Notice of Intent filed by Haley and Aldrich Incorporated for repairs to the Squannacook River Dam.
- **Discussion:**
  - Commissioner Hurley reported that at the prior meeting, Commissioner Morrison had suggested that someone should be prepared to speak at town meeting on the conservation perspective regarding the dam. Commissioner Hurley stated he called the moderator to check whether someone was already scheduled to speak on behalf of opponents but had not received a return call.
  - Commissioner Lathrop read into the record a letter from Lucy Wallace, Chair of the Wild and Scenic Stewardship Council, addressed to the Groton Select Board and copied to the Conservation Commission. The letter stated the Council voted at its April 16 meeting to support removal of the West Groton Dam and to oppose the proposed repair article on the May 2 town meeting warrant. The letter cited the Council's mandate under the Wild and Scenic Stewardship Plan to protect the free-flowing nature of the rivers and described multiple plan goals supporting removal, including restoring biodiversity, cold water fisheries, anadromous fish passage, freshwater mussel habitat, water quality, wildlife corridors, flood attenuation, and recreational safety. The letter also noted that state dam removal funding is readily available and that the Division of Ecological Restoration has deemed this removal a high priority project.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the Squannacook River Dam Notice of Intent to May 12, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The public hearing was continued to May 12, 2026.

### **8:20 PM: Ratify Emergency Certification for DPW Culvert Work off Peabody Street**

- **Proposal:** Ratification of an emergency certification issued by Administrator Steeves for potential DPW culvert work off Peabody Street.
- **Presentation:** Administrator Steeves stated that the DPW Director had requested an emergency certification approximately a week and a half prior due to a potential flooding hazard where a culvert runs under the road connecting two wetland areas. She stated no work had been performed as of the previous day and that the certification is valid until May 16. Conditions include returning the area to original condition, no heavy machinery within the resource area, and keeping the area free of debris and polluted runoff.

- **Discussion:**
    - Commissioner Lathrop stated the certification was appropriate as a stopgap but noted it was unusual to issue an emergency certification before an emergency occurs. He recommended the DPW Director file a proper determination or Notice of Intent so the work can be authorized for up to three years, rather than requiring repeated emergency certifications.
  - **Motion:** A motion was moved and seconded to ratify the emergency certification for work off Peabody Street.
  - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
  - **Outcome:** The emergency certification was ratified.
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## 2. GENERAL BUSINESS

### 2.1 GENERAL DISCUSSIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### Shepley Hill Conservation Restriction

- Jill Mann appeared on behalf of the Shepley Hill developer. She presented the monument plan approved by the Planning Board showing the location of all granite posts and wooden posts. She stated the granite posts encompass the exterior of the property and argued they are sufficient to identify the conservation restriction boundary. She noted that the Commission previously signed the conservation restriction, and that the Planning Board's waiver of granite bounds for interior lot lines was appropriate because the development is a condominium (one lot) rather than a subdivision with individual lot boundaries. She stated the conservation restriction includes a provision requiring the condominium association to reimburse the Commission for any survey costs if boundary identification becomes necessary.
- Commissioner Morrison raised concerns about the ability to walk the conservation restriction boundary using the wooden posts shown on the monument plan, noting the difficulty of sighting straight lines between posts along the irregular boundary. He stated the plan associated with the order of conditions (showing straighter lot lines) is different from the monument plan approved by the Planning Board.
- Commissioner Lathrop acknowledged that the Commission had already signed the conservation restriction and stated the convoluted boundary is partly the Commission's responsibility for not catching it earlier. He stated he could accept wooden posts because the conservation restriction requires the condo association to replace them, but he would have preferred granite bounds at every change in direction. He asked whether the boundary could be simplified by trading equal areas to create straighter lines, but was told the resurvey cost would be expensive.

- Commissioner Hurley requested that the order of conditions provision for boundary markers be reviewed and stated he wanted markers at every change in direction.
- Chair Easom asked whether the applicant had contacted the Groton Conservation Trust or Trustees of Reservations about taking over the CR monitoring. Ms. Mann stated she had reached out to both but that due diligence would take six months to a year.
- The Commission requested that the applicant provide an overlay map showing the location of all installed markers on the conservation restriction plan (not the monument plan) for review at the May 12 meeting.
- **Outcome:** The applicant agreed to submit the overlay map prior to the May 12 meeting.

### **Portable ADA Restrooms at Williams Barn**

- The Conservation Administrator stated the Williams Barn committee is requesting that the Commission fund portable ADA restrooms for July through November 2026 at \$119 per month, as was done in the prior year.
- **Motion:** A motion was made to cover the cost of portable restrooms at Williams Barn for July through November 2026, not to exceed \$700.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

## **2.2 COMMITTEE UPDATES**

### **Invasive Species Committee**

- Commissioner Lathrop reported that barberry removed from Lawrence Park last year was not found during a return visit, indicating the treatment was successful. However, several continuous acres of barberry were discovered in Groton Hills.

### **Stewardship Committee**

- The Stewardship Committee is scheduling a site walk the following day at the Meadowview Conservation Area, meeting at 2:00 PM at the Kirk Farm Road trailhead.

### **Sargisson Beach**

- Administrator Steeves reported on preparations for spring at Sargisson Beach, including implementation of a kayak rack sign-up system. Unregistered equipment must be removed by May 1 or it will be collected and stored as unclaimed property. She is also working to hire a ranger for the season.

### **Community Preservation Committee**

- Chair Easom reported that the town manager attended the CPC meeting on Monday night and informed them that bids for the Cow Pond Brook Field Project came in approximately 16% over estimate, requiring an additional \$700,000. The Parks Commission and CPC both voted to recommend the project at the revised total of \$4.9 million. The article will go to town meeting at that amount.

## **2.3 LAND MANAGEMENT & ACQUISITION**

### **Mowing Pacer Way**

- The Conservation Administrator stated that Greg Ganley, who mows the Pacer Way field, had inquired about the mowing schedule. Commissioner Lathrop stated there is a vesper sparrow restriction on the parcel and Administrator Steeves should check the files for the specific timing. Commissioner Lathrop thanked Mr. Ganley for his volunteer mowing work. The Commission also discussed the agricultural field being hayed, and noted the need to ensure proper documentation for private use of public land. Administrator Steeves will research the restrictions and timing.

### **Millie Turner Dam Removal**

- Chair Easom announced that Pat Huckery of Fish and Wildlife would be presenting the following evening at 5:30 PM in Pepperell at the site of the former Millie Turner Dam on the Nissitissit River, which was removed approximately ten years ago by the Division of Ecological Restoration at no cost to the town. Commissioner Morrison noted he had visited the site and described the restored habitat as beautiful.

### **Site walk on Shirley parcel along Squannacook River (123A-1)**

- Commissioner Hurley reported on a site walk at the Commission's parcel in Shirley along the Squannacook River. They found granite bounds installed by Fish and Wildlife at the corners of the parcel and confirmed the GIS maps are slightly off from the physical markers. They observed the swimming area on the Shirley side has accumulated trash, including an overflowing barrel, and debris including boards nailed to a tree and remnants of a former rope swing. Commissioner Hurley estimated the cleanup could be done by a few people in about an hour with a pickup truck, if access through the Fish and Wildlife gate can be arranged.
- Commissioner Lathrop recommended exploring divestiture of the Shirley parcel, noting it is logistically difficult for the Groton Commission to own and monitor land on the other side of the river in a different town. He suggested approaching Fish and Wildlife, whose land surrounds the parcel, about accepting a transfer, as long as the land remains protected.

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to authorize Chair Easom to reach out to Fish and Wildlife regarding potential transfer of the Shirley parcel.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Chair Easom will reach out to Fish and Wildlife at the Millie Turner Dam event to discuss.

### **Donation of Parcel 253-35**

- The Conservation Administrator reported she was approached by a developer of the Monarch Path development who would like to donate Parcel 253-35 (approximately two acres) to the Commission. Commissioner Lathrop brought up the GIS and noted the parcel appears to be landlocked with no public access, located off Gilson Road near the Hindu temple. The Commission reviewed the parcel and found it contains DEP-mapped wetlands, which likely explains why it is being offered for donation rather than developed. Commissioners expressed concern about accepting land that cannot be accessed for monitoring. Commissioner Lathrop stated he would accept the parcel if a reasonable pedestrian access easement could be obtained, while Commissioner Smigelski and Commissioner Morrison stated reluctance. Commissioner Wolfe suggested checking for rare species or interesting plant communities before making a decision.
- **Outcome:** Administrator Steeves will contact the developer to request permission for a site walk and to ask whether a permanent access easement could be included. The matter will be discussed again at the May 12 meeting.

## **2.4 APPROVE MEETING MINUTES**

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from February 10, 2026, as amended.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from March 10, 2026, as amended.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from March 24, 2026, as amended.
- **Vote:** Chair Easom abstained (absent from March 24 meeting). All others in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from April 14, 2026, as amended.
- **Vote:** Commissioner Kuliesis abstained (absent from the April 14 meeting). All others in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

## **2.5 APPROVE INVOICE**

- **Motion:** Commissioner Hurley moved to authorize the Conservation Administrator to pay the Groton Herald a total of \$176.25.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

## 2.6 ONGOING ISSUES

- Commissioner Hurley reported that a turtle nesting area at the end of Lost Lake Drive, established under a prior Notice of Intent, appears to have been converted to a garden. Commissioner Morrison confirmed the original filing included a turtle nesting area with a site plan on file. Administrator Steeves was asked to pull the historic records and, if a turtle nesting requirement is confirmed, add the property to the site walk list and notify the homeowner. The matter will be followed up at the next site walk.
  - The Commission deferred the full ongoing issues review to a future meeting.
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## ADJOURNMENT

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

APPROVED: 5/12/2026