



**Conservation Commission Meeting**  
Tuesday, May 12th, 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

**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: Continued Public Hearing-Retroactive Notice of Intent- 101 Longley Road DEP# 169-1292**

- **Proposal:** Retroactive Notice of Intent filed for filling and grading work within the buffer zone at 101 Longley Road.
- **Presentation:** The applicant reported that a DEP number had been received shortly after the prior meeting. Administrator Steeves had prepared a draft Order of Conditions for the Commission's review.
- **Discussion:**
  - The Commission reviewed DEP comments. DEP noted that the wetland line was established using top of bank, that no bordering vegetated wetland was identified, and that no erosion or sedimentation within the resource area was observed. The applicant confirmed these points and noted that silt fence and wattles were in place.
  - DEP also noted that the site is within the Petapawag Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The Commission reviewed MEPA thresholds and determined that the project does not trigger an Environmental Notification Form (ENF) requirement, as no state permit, funding, or agency action is involved and the disturbed area falls below the updated half-acre ACEC acreage threshold. The Commission agreed that the DEP reviewer likely intended only to note the ACEC designation.
  - Commissioner Lathrop requested a condition requiring conservation markers at the 100-foot buffer boundary at intervals of no more than 50 feet, extending at least one foot above ground.

- **Motion (WPA Order of Conditions):** A motion was made to issue an Order of Conditions under the Wetlands Protection Act for DEP# 169-1292, 101 Longley Road, incorporating boilerplate conditions 1 through 19 and special conditions 20 through 52, including: replanting of disturbed areas within the buffer zones with a native conservation seed mix and four native maple trees at the 50-foot no-disturb area, the 50-foot no-disturb area to renaturalize in perpetuity, and conservation markers at the 100-foot wetland boundary at intervals of no more than 50 feet, extending at least one foot above ground.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Motion (Bylaw Order of Conditions):** A motion was made to issue an Order of Conditions for DEP# 169-1292, 101 Longley Road, incorporating conditions 1 through 10, including: replanting with a native conservation seed mix and four native maple trees at the 50-foot no-disturb area, the 50-foot no-disturb buffer to renaturalize, and conservation markers at the 100-foot boundary at intervals of no more than 50 feet, extending at least one foot above ground.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Motion (Close Public Hearing):** A motion was made and seconded to close the public hearing for 101 Longley Road.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Orders of Conditions issued under both the Wetlands Protection Act and the Groton Wetlands Protection Bylaw. Public hearing closed. The applicant was advised of the 10-day appeal period.

**6:45 PM: Continued Public Hearing- Notice of Intent- 91 Chicopee Row DEP# PENDING**

- **Proposal:** Notice of intent for work in the buffer zone at 91 Chicopee Row.
- **Presentation:** The applicant requested a continuance to the next meeting.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing to May 26, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Public hearing continued to May 26, 2026.

**6:55 PM: Notice of Intent- 16 Longley Road- DEP#169-1293**

- **Proposal:** Notice of Intent filed for installation of an in-ground pool at 16 Longley Road.
- **Presentation:** The applicant appeared with a consultant joining via Zoom. It was reported that a DEP number had been received since the prior meeting and that a site walk had taken place the prior Saturday. The project involves replacing a rotting timber retaining wall in approximately the same footprint using large block construction and installing a new in-ground pool closer to the house. The applicant noted that the proposed shed shown on earlier plans has been removed from the project. The consultant clarified that the outer face of the new retaining wall would align with the

existing wall face, and that a section of the old wall running perpendicular to the house would be removed and not replaced, returning that area to lawn. Cartridge pool filters are under consideration to address backwash concerns, and an infiltration recharge trench is shown on the plan for pool deck runoff.

- **Discussion:**
  - Commissioner Wolfe asked about the construction sequencing for equipment access given the wall work involved, and asked if invasive plant removal could be incorporated into the project.
  - Commissioner Hurley noted that because the existing conditions are largely disturbed hardscape, native buffer plantings along the wetland edge would serve as mitigation and should be shown on the plan.
  - Commissioner Morrison stated that the project is essentially like-for-like replacement and had no significant concerns, but supported invasive removal and mitigation planting.
  - Commissioner Lathrop expressed concern about incremental encroachment into the 50-foot and 100-foot buffer zones. He requested an updated plan removing the shed, showing net change in disturbed area within the 50-foot and 100-foot zones separately, and including pervious versus impervious calculations before and after construction.
  - Chair Easom agreed with the request for an updated plan and the pre- and post-construction table.
  - The consultant described hardscape calculations already included on the plan and agreed to provide the requested table. The applicant confirmed the shed has been dropped and that area will return to lawn.
  - Administrator Steeves agreed to provide the applicant with a list of native plantings appropriate for the buffer zone.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing to May 26, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Public hearing continued to May 26, 2026. Applicant to submit an updated plan with the shed removed, net change calculations for both buffer zones, pervious/impervious breakdown, proposed native plantings along the buffer, and a construction sequencing plan.

### **7:10 PM: Possible violation at 138 Hemlock Park Drive**

- **Presentation:** Administrator Steeves reported that the Commission had been investigating potential unpermitted work on a shared access road at 138 Hemlock Park Drive. The road serves three properties and is bordered by wetlands. The Groton Water Department holds two conservation restrictions on the parcel, an aquifer protection restriction and a conservation restriction, though the Commission is not a party in either. A resident from 138 Hemlock Park Drive addressed the Commission and provided

background on the access road, its history, and the extent of recent grading and fill work.

- **Discussion:**
  - Commissioner Lathrop noted that the Commission's jurisdiction is limited to the Wetlands Protection Act and the bylaw. Routine road maintenance does not require a permit, but widening a road within the 100-foot buffer does. He noted that the Commission's only enforcement mechanism is against the landowner of record.
  - It was noted that the Water Department is the better enforcement authority regarding the conservation restrictions, and that their board meeting on this matter had been rescheduled to May 26, 2026.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to authorize Administrator Steeves to send a notice letter to all abutters and users of the access road advising that any past or ongoing work within the 100-foot wetland buffer must stop, and that any future work requires a filing with the Conservation Commission.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Administrator Steeves authorized to send a notice letter to all abutters and users of the access road.

### **7:20 PM: Request for Determination of Applicability- Off Baddacook Pond Road (parcel 242-4)**

- **Proposal:** Request for Determination of Applicability filed for the rebuild of a single-family seasonal cottage on the same footprint following a fire.
- **Presentation:** The applicant appeared and described the property, a one-bedroom seasonal cottage purchased in 1979 that burned approximately one month prior. The applicant intends to rebuild on the same footprint and wishes to remove three to five trees that pose a risk to the new structure, along with other some fallen trees.
- **Discussion:**
  - Commissioner Hurley and Commissioner Morrison advised the applicant to submit a plan showing the proposed footprint with dimensions, all trees proposed for removal identified by location, and any fallen trees the applicant wants to clear.
  - Commissioner Lathrop stated that as long as the footprint is the same, he had no concerns, but requested a dimensioned plan for the record.
  - It was noted that if a new septic system is included in the project, a Notice of Intent rather than an RDA may be required. The applicant was advised to consult with Administrator Steeves before filing.
  - Administrator Steeves noted that RDA approvals are valid for three years without the option to renew.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue to May 26, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

- **Outcome:** Continued to May 26, 2026. Applicant to return with a dimensioned site plan showing the proposed footprint, all trees proposed for removal, and the septic design.

### **7:30 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 Playing Fields.
- **Presentation:** Administrator Steeves reported that the filing has not been withdrawn.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing to May 26, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Public hearing continued to May 26, 2026.

### **7:35 PM: Continued Public Hearing- Notice of Intent - Squannacook River Dam- DEP# PENDING**

- **Proposal:** Notice of Intent filed for repair of the Squannacook River Dam.
  - **Presentation:** No update was presented.
  - **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing to May 26, 2026.
  - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
  - **Outcome:** Public hearing continued to May 26, 2026.
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## **2. GENERAL BUSINESS**

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

#### **Updated Court Date**

- It was reported that a court hearing involving the Conservation Commission previously scheduled for last week, was postponed. The new hearing date is August 26, 2026 at the Lowell Courthouse. Chair Easom stated he planned to attend.

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

- Commissioner Morrison provided an update on the Shepley Hill subdivision. The Commission issued an Order of Conditions in February 2021 for a 14-lot subdivision. That order was appealed to DEP by the Conservation Trust, not the applicant. DEP

issued an order upholding the Commission's conditions but attached an excerpt of the Commission's bylaw Order of Conditions, from which DEP removed the last seven conditions referencing individual lot requirements.

- Commissioner Morrison noted that the plans on file at the Registry of Deeds still show a 14-lot subdivision, and that the conservation restriction language references the Town of Hamilton rather than the Town of Groton in one location, which may be an error.
- The Commission noted that the applicant had never returned for a modification to the Order of Conditions to show changes to the site plan, and that the CR went through state review without the Commission being a party. Commissioner Morrison will continue reviewing the CR language for inconsistencies. The matter is expected to return at the next meeting when the applicant's representative is present.

### **Discussion- Beaver dam on James Brook**

- Administrator Steeves reported that a beaver dam on James Brook, located on private property, has been on the Commission's radar but the landowner does not wish for it to be removed. The dam is backing up water onto an adjacent property owner's land near the agricultural road. It was noted that the dam cannot be removed without an NOI and Board of Health involvement unless the Board of Health issues an emergency order due to a septic system impact, which is not currently the case.

### **Discussion: Vernal Pool Certifications**

- It was reported that two active vernal pools on the Farmers and Mechanics conservation parcel have been documented for the purpose of certification. Species documented include wood frogs, spring peepers, and blue-spotted salamanders.
- Commissioner Lathrop noted that wood frogs are an obligate vernal pool species and that documentation of any of the six obligate species is sufficient for certification. The Commission confirmed its awareness as landowner, as required by the certification process, and authorized the volunteer to proceed with filing to Natural Heritage. The Town of Groton Conservation Commission will be listed as landowner and the volunteer as applicant.

### **Discussion: Projects on Conservation Land with Conservation Restrictions**

- Administrator Steeves noted that the recent Eagle Scout bridge project on the Walker-Cox property was approved without first consulting the Groton Conservation Trust, which holds a conservation restriction on that parcel.
- The Commission acknowledged this as an error and committed to consulting CR holders before approving projects on restricted conservation land going forward. Administrator Steeves sent the project information to the Trust for their review.

## **2.2 COMMITTEE UPDATES**

## **Stewardship Committee**

- Commissioner Lathrop reported that the Stewardship Committee recently completed a monitoring walk at Meadowview. Overall conditions were okay, but one abutter has created a well-worn path extending approximately 100 feet into Commission land, installed a gate in their fence for access, and has been dumping yard clippings. There was also evidence of other dumping. The Committee will address these issues.

## **Sargisson Beach**

- Commissioner Hurley reported that docks are in for the season and that he is working with DPW on placement of kayaks for new RAC applicants. The fiber optic cable for the beach camera system was broken during winter maintenance and IT staff are working to pull a new cable before the beach opens.

## **2.3 LAND MANAGEMENT & ACQUISITION**

### **Possible encroachment on Walker property (off Chicopee Row)**

- During the Saturday site walk, the Commission observed an encroachment on the Walker property. A pile of material and disturbed soil were identified on Commission land. Commissioner Lathrop noted the disturbed area extends roughly 100 feet into Commission land and that trees have been cut. It was noted that DPW had been informally notified about the pile in late 2025 and indicated they would address it. Administrator Steeves will contact Town Manager Haddad to determine how to proceed.

### **Possible encroachment on Lawrence Park Conservation Area along boarder with 65 West Main St (parcel 106-18)**

- A neighbor appeared and described activity at the recently sold property at 65 West Main Street. The new owner clear-cut a large number of trees, some of which were on Commission land without permits and prior to conducting a survey. The owner afterwards had the land surveyed, and wooden survey stakes confirmed that trees were cut on Commission land. Photographs documenting partially buried construction debris and fill material on the property were also discussed.
- Commissioner Lathrop noted that no obvious wetlands were present, so there does not appear to be a Wetlands Protection Act violation. However, the cutting of trees on Commission land constitutes a trespass. The Commission does not have an enforcement

order mechanism for trespass and will need to pursue the matter accordingly. Administrator Steeves will consult with Town Manager Haddad on next steps.

- The matter will also be referred to the Earth Removal/Stormwater Advisory Committee and the Board of Health due to evidence of buried construction debris. Chair Easom noted he sits on the Stormwater Advisory Committee and will bring it there.
- Administrator Steeves will prepare a map of the affected parcel boundaries and seek RFPs to have the perimeter of the conservation area professionally surveyed with granite bounds installed. Administrator Steeves will work with Commissioner Lathrop to identify the specific boundary segment to be surveyed.
- The neighbor was encouraged to share any photographs with Administrator Steeves and was referred to the Water Department regarding the conservation restrictions.

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

- Administrator Steeves reported that the prospective donor met with her that morning and provided updated mapping. The proposed arrangement involves the donor conveying a large parcel to the Commission in fee. The parcel contains a certified vernal pool and a potential uncertified vernal pool. The Commission found the arrangement reasonable and noted that it would want a surveyed plan reflecting the exchange with granite bounds. Administrator Steeves will follow up with the donor, and the Commission agreed to ask what he would like the parcel named.

### **Parcel in Shirley (Squannacook River)**

- Commissioner Lathrop reported that he had spoken with Anne Gagnon of the state regarding offering a Commission-owned parcel in Shirley to the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, and that she was interested. It was noted that an Article 97 process will be required and that Town Meeting authorization may be needed.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to offer the northernmost Commission-owned parcel in the Town of Shirley, located on the Squannacook River opposite Crossroads, to the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Administrator Steeves to notify Ann Gagnon and get guidance on next steps.

### **Turtle Habitat at Academy Hill**

- Following the Saturday site walk, Chair Easom reported that the turtle habitat at the Academy Hill conservation area is overgrown and in poor condition. He recommended bringing in a herpetologist to assess what remediation is needed. It was confirmed that the parcel is owned by the Commission and that a \$50,000 escrow fund exists that the homeowners association is required to replenish as restoration costs occur.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to send a letter to the homeowners association advising that the Commission plans to proceed with assessment and

potential restoration of the turtle habitat area, and that there may be a financial impact requiring them to replenish the escrow fund.

- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

## 2.4 APPROVE MEETING MINUTES

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from April 28, 2026, as amended.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

## 2.5 APPROVE INVOICE

- No invoices were presented.

## 2.6 ONGOING ISSUES

- Commissioner Morrison spoke about the ongoing issue of the turtle nesting area at 0 Lost Lake Drive. He noted that the area appears to have been encroached upon by the adjacent homeowner's gardens, that conservation markers are not in place, and that the homeowner has not complied with the Order of Conditions.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to authorize Administrator Steeves to send a letter to the homeowner notifying them that conservation markers for the turtle nesting area should be installed, that gardens have been observed straying into the nesting area, and that restoration to compliance with the Order of Conditions is required.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

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## ADJOURNMENT

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

APPROVED: 5/26/2026