



Conservation Commission Meeting
Tuesday, May 26, 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, 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.

1. APPOINTMENTS AND HEARINGS

6:30 PM: Continued Public Hearing- Notice of Intent- 91 Chicopee Row DEP# 169-1295

- **Proposal:** Notice of intent for work in the buffer zone at 91 Chicopee Row.
- **Presentation:** The applicant and their representative reported that mitigation had been discussed at the prior meeting. Originally about half the dwelling was within the 100-foot buffer zone, but now the dwelling has been shifted so that the closest corner is now 98 feet, and a wildflower pollinator seed mix is proposed at the rear of the property. A DEP file number was received with no comments.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioner Lathrop found the plan reasonably acceptable and asked that the native seed mix area be memorialized. He noted he would allow mowing once a year, around November when the plants are dormant, if the homeowner wishes to keep the woody plants down. He asked for boundary markers along the 91-foot contour at intervals of no more than 50 feet, and preferred granite markers extending at least 12 inches above grade with conservation medallions supplied by the Commission.
 - Commissioners Morrison and Hurley supported pressure treated four-by-four posts with about four inches above grade in place of granite. Commissioner Hurley noted that wooden posts observed at another property on Longley Road had remained legible and intact since 2002.
 - Chair Easom noted granite is preferable but wooden posts have traditionally been accepted and would work here.

- Commissioner Smigelski suggested a concrete post as a lower cost, long lasting alternative. A member of the public referenced the Town of Groton granite bound standard and noted that concrete or granite posts often contain rebar so they can be located later.
- The Commission agreed on concrete markers. Administrator Steeves agreed to draft the order specifying concrete markers.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to close the public hearing for 91 Chicopee Row.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Public hearing closed. Administrator Steeves to prepare the Order of Conditions specifying concrete boundary markers along the 91-foot contour at intervals of no more than 50 feet, with conservation medallions supplied by the Commission.

6:35 PM: Continued Public Hearing- Notice of Intent- 16 Longley Road- DEP#169-1293

- **Proposal:** Notice of Intent for installation of an in-ground pool.
- **Presentation:** The applicant's representative reported that the DEP comments were in line with the Commission's prior comments and recommended a compensatory planting area along the limit of disturbance. A 242-square-foot planting area is proposed with high bush blueberry, low bush blueberry, witch hazel, and winterberry, selected from a list provided by Administrator Steeves. A stockpile area and additional straw wattle along the rear of the planting area were also added.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioner Hurley noted the planting area and added that the straw wattle addresses the buffer impacts.
 - Commissioner Wolfe asked what currently exists where the planting is proposed (grass) and highlighted giving the new shrubs a good chance to establish.
 - Commissioner Lathrop stated he could not support the project, viewing it as too much creep into the 50-foot buffer and more than the lot can sustain.
 - Chair Easom asked the representative to review the pre and post development figures for the 100-foot and 50-foot buffer zones. During the review, it was found that a 280-square-foot restoration area had been left out of the pre-development total. When that area was included, the figures showed a net decrease in disturbance after construction rather than an increase. The representative agreed to update the plan with the corrected numbers.
 - Commissioner Lathrop reiterated that landscaped area is being reduced while decks and pool deck increase, indicating continued creep into the 50-foot and 100-foot buffers even though the totals net out in the applicant's favor.
 - Commissioner Kuliesis asked about construction access and raised concern about the extent of construction disturbance in the 50-foot buffer to build the pool and replace the retaining wall. The representative noted the disturbance is

temporary and that an erosion control blanket or temporary seeding would be used, and that the new block wall replaces an existing failing timber wall.

- The Commission reviewed the DEP comments. DEP asked how impacts to the bordering vegetated wetland would be avoided during construction, and if the block wall would require footings with heavy equipment, excavation, and dewatering or would be placed at grade. DEP also noted that where a buffer zone is already developed, restoration of natural vegetation may be considered.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to close the public hearing for 16 Longley Road.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Later in the meeting, at the applicant's request, the Commission took up the Orders of Conditions for 16 Longley Road.**
- **Motion (Wetlands Protection Act Order of Conditions):** A motion was made and seconded to issue an Order of Conditions under the Wetlands Protection Act incorporating conditions 1 through 19 and special conditions 20 through 49, striking condition 47 and adding condition 50 requiring additional monumentation around the proposed native replanting area.
- **Vote:** Motion carried. Commissioner Lathrop opposed.
- **Motion (Bylaw Order of Conditions):** A motion was made and seconded to issue an Order of Conditions under the Groton Wetlands Protection Bylaw incorporating conditions 1 through 7 and adding condition 8 requiring additional monumentation in perpetuity to define the native replanting area.
- **Vote:** Motion carried. Commissioner Lathrop opposed.
- **Outcome:** Public hearing closed and Orders of Conditions issued under both the Wetlands Protection Act and the Groton Wetlands Protection Bylaw.

6:45 PM: Retroactive Notice of Intent- 60 Valley Road- DEP# PENDING

- **Proposal:** Retroactive Notice of Intent for unpermitted work in a vegetated wetland.
- **Presentation:** The applicant's representative, a wetland scientist, was unable to attend and requested a continuance. Administrator Steeves and the Commissioners who attended the site walk described the conditions observed.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioners who attended the site walk reported that the culvert on the property has collapsed, likely from equipment access, and that water no longer flows toward the pond as intended. Purple loosestrife was starting in the area. Construction equipment and trash were observed in the wetland, and the silt fence was lifted off the ground and not functioning.
 - Administrator Steeves reported the site is poorly managed. The wetland scientist had recommended tying the construction issues into the enforcement order, but the matters were handled separately. She asked if the Commission wanted her to issue a second enforcement order for the stockpiles and site mismanagement.
 - Commissioner Hurley recused himself as an abutter.

- Commissioner Lathrop recommended an immediate enforcement order to stop all work, remove debris from the wetlands, repair the silt fence, install a proper erosion barrier where trees were cleared, and prohibit work until the Administrator is satisfied.
- Commissioner Morrison supported Commissioner Lathrop's wording, noting that the construction issue is separate from the rebuilding of the house. Commissioner Smigelski agreed. Commissioner Kuliesis agreed based on the photographs as well.
- The Commission determined the Notice of Intent and the enforcement order are separate matters.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the retroactive Notice of Intent to June 9, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Commissioner Hurley recused. Motion carried.
- **Motion (Enforcement Order):** A motion was made and seconded to issue an enforcement order requiring all work to stop immediately, debris to be removed from the wetlands, the silt fence to be repaired on the lake side and a proper barrier installed on the other side, and no work to resume until the Administrator is satisfied.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Commissioner Hurley recused. Motion carried.
- **Outcome:** Retroactive Notice of Intent continued to June 9, 2026. Enforcement order to be issued.

6:50 PM: Request for Extension on Order of Conditions- Baddacook Pond Vegetation Management Project- DEP# 169-1138

- **Proposal:** Request for a three year extension of the Order of Conditions for the Baddacook Pond Vegetation Management Project.
- **Presentation:** The Chair of the Weed Harvester Committee appeared with two other committee members. He reported that Baddacook Pond has had invasive weeds, mostly fanwort and milfoil, for many years, and that the harvesting program has been running for over ten years. Last year about 91 hours of remediation were performed. The weed harvester cuts the weeds, which are brought out at the boat ramp, loaded into a truck, and taken to the transfer station for composting.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioner Lathrop asked how the weeds are removed. It was explained they are taken out at the boat ramp and loaded directly into a truck.
 - Commissioner Kuliesis asked about composting invasive weeds. It was explained the aquatic weeds are dead and not viable by the time they are composted. Commissioner Smigelski added that compost heated to 160 to 170 degrees destroys seeds.
 - Commissioner Hurley noted he has assisted with the program and supports it.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to extend the Order of Conditions for the Baddacook Pond Vegetation Management Project for three years.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

- **Outcome:** Extension granted. Administrator Steeves to calculate and record the new expiration date.

7:00 PM: Request for Determination of Applicability- Off Baddacook Pond Road (parcel 242-4)

- **Proposal:** Request for Determination of Applicability for the rebuild of a single-family home.
- **Presentation:** Administrator Steeves reported that the applicant is still deciding among options, including whether to combine the work into a Notice of Intent with a septic system or to seek separate approval for tree removal and demolition, and recommended continuing the matter.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue to June 9, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The matter was continued to June 9, 2026.

7:10 PM: Minor Change Request- 500 Main Street- DEP# 169-1263

- **Proposal:** Minor change request for the approved erosion control.
- **Presentation:** The applicant's representative reported that the approved plans show a staked hay bale and silt fence detail. Given that the site is relatively flat, the contractor proposes a 9-inch diameter staked straw wattle with silt fence instead of the hay bale, which would provide a similar level of protection.
- **Discussion:**
- Commissioner Morrison asked if the straw wattles would use biodegradable netting. It was confirmed they would be biodegradable and left in place. Commissioners Hurley and Wolfe agreed, noting no plastic netting should be used. The remaining Commissioners had no concerns.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the minor change, replacing the staked hay bale with a staked straw wattle with silt fence.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Minor change approved.

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 the Cow Pond Brook Playing Fields.
- **Presentation:** Administrator Steeves reported nothing new. Chair Easom reported that, at a recent meeting with Town Manager Mark Haddad regarding the Open Space and Recreation Plan working group, Mr. Haddad stated that he may reduce the scope of the project (which was defeated at Town Meeting) to the minimum required to qualify for

the grant, and may bring it back in a different form in the fall. He requested the hearing be kept open.

- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioner Lathrop noted the repeated continuances and suggested that the applicant withdraw and refile if a largely different proposal is planned, but agreed to continue.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing for Cow Pond Brook Playing Fields to June 9, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The matter was continued to June 9, 2026.

7:25 PM: Discussion- Cow Pond Brook Fields Gate

- **Presentation:** Mary Jennings, Chairman of the Park Commission, reported that the Park Commission sponsors the CPA grant for Cow Pond and that the project did not pass at Town Meeting. The Park Commission has not yet decided whether to bring it back for fall Town Meeting. She reported that the access road to the baseball fields has remained open and unlocked, contrary to the 2009 negative Determination of Applicability, which required the road to be kept locked and inaccessible except to emergency vehicles, with three keys. Records indicate that the road was reported locked in 2013 and 2014, but it is currently out of compliance.
- **Discussion:**
 - Administrator Steeves confirmed that the road has been out of compliance since the 2009 Determination. She noted two vernal pools along the road and the proximity to endangered species habitat, and suggested finding out who has the keys.
 - The gate was intended to be closed roughly April through September or October for the turtle nesting season, with emergency access only.
 - The Commission discussed parking, estimated at about a dozen cars during baseball games, and alternative parking near the soccer fields.
 - Commissioner Kuliesis supported closing the gate and adding signage.
 - Commissioner Hurley supported signage and locking the gate.
 - The Commission discussed sign wording and agreed to avoid referencing turtles, preferring wording such as sensitive habitat or conservation restriction. Signage was left to the Park Commission and would not be part of the enforcement order.
 - It was confirmed that the applicant on the 2009 Determination was the Park Commission.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to issue an enforcement order to the Park Commission to keep the gate locked in accordance with the 2009 Request for Determination of Applicability.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

- **Outcome:** Enforcement order to be issued to the Park Commission. The Commission will also contact Natural Heritage as a courtesy.
- Ms. Jennings asked if the Commission would take a position supporting the Cow Pond CPA application. The Commission stated it would be inappropriate for the Commission to take a position while an open hearing on the project exists, though individual members may take their own positions.

7:35 PM: Continued Public Hearing- Notice of Intent - Squannacook River Dam- DEP# 169-1294

- **Proposal:** Notice of Intent for repairs to the Squannacook River Dam.
- **Presentation:** Administrator Steeves reported that the Town Manager wishes to keep the Notice of Intent open so that if the dam repair ever proceeds, conservation approval will already be in place. A DEP number has been received. The Town of Shirley is closing its hearing and issuing an Order of Conditions the same evening. Administrator Steeves coordinated with Shirley's Conservation Administrator who amended Shirley's special conditions to match Groton's. She noted this is only conservation approval, valid for three years if the repair proceeds, not a town-wide approval for the dam repair.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioner Morrison questioned a reference to Groton Land Holdings Inc. at the top of Shirley's draft order. It was explained the parcel likely has no assessing data and the river may be assumed to belong to the Town of Groton.
 - The Commission and the public had not yet seen Shirley's Order of Conditions.
 - Commissioner Lathrop recommended letting Shirley issue its order first, then having Administrator Steeves compare it and prepare a compatible Groton order for the next meeting.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing for the Squannacook River Dam to June 9, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The public hearing was continued to June 9, 2026.

7:50 PM: Request for Extension on Order of Conditions- 6 Wyman Road (Lot 1) DEP # 169-1067

- **Proposal:** Request for a three year extension of the Order of Conditions.
- **Presentation:** The applicant appeared representing his family's property and requested a three year extension.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioner Morrison noted that nothing has changed other than snowmelt and had no questions. Commissioner Wolfe noted the site walk showed no significant change. Commissioner Hurley reported the Saturday site walk found no significant change to the wetland extent or boundary.

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the extension of the Order of Conditions for three years.
 - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
 - **Outcome:** Extension approved for three years and to be recorded at the Registry of Deeds.
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2. GENERAL BUSINESS

2.1 GENERAL DISCUSSIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Shepley Hill Conservation Restriction

- Representatives were present regarding the Shepley Hill conservation restriction. It was explained that the local Order of Conditions still stands because only the wetland portion was appealed to DEP, and the local order itself was never appealed.
- It was clarified that the project is a 13-lot residential subdivision held in condominium ownership (originally 14 lots, reduced to 13 during the planning board process). The lotting is required to create the roadways, and the condominium association owns all the land.
- Commissioner Morrison noted that the plan on file at the Registry of Deeds shows the lots and is referenced in the Order of Conditions. He stated that the change to common ownership should have come before the Commission as a change in plan. The representative stated the dwelling locations and jurisdictional area did not change and that the open space plan was approved.
- Commissioner Lathrop stated the Commission needs to be able to walk the boundary and identify where the conservation restriction begins. He noted that fences appear to follow the restricted area lines behind ten of the thirteen duplexes, and he suggested treating the fences as the boundary, with monumentation added at the three lots without fences.
- The Order of Conditions (condition 15) gave the option to install either granite bounds or wooden posts and did not require granite bounds.
- The representatives agreed to provide an updated plan showing the meets and bounds, fence locations, and the conservation restriction, and to add cedar posts at the three lots without fences. A site walk was scheduled for Saturday, June 6, 2026 to walk the boundary with the plan in hand.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue to June 9, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The matter was continued to June 9, 2026 with a site walk scheduled for June 6, 2026. The applicant agreed to provide an updated plan showing meets and bounds, fence locations, and the conservation restriction.

Approve Letter to 65 West Main Street

- Administrator Steeves presented a draft letter regarding suspected cutting of trees on conservation land bordering 65 West Main Street.
- The Commission reviewed the daily fine structure: \$50 for the first day, then \$100 and \$300 on the following days, payable by check to the Town of Groton by June 9, 2026.
- The letter requires a restoration plan prepared by a certified botanist, subject to approval by the Commission. A date on the letter was adjusted so that a deadline does not fall on a meeting day.
- **Motion (Approve Letter):** A motion was made and seconded to approve the letter as amended.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Motion (Issue Fine):** A motion was made and seconded to issue a \$50 fine for cutting trees on Commission property.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The letter was approved as amended and a \$50 fine will be issued.

Letter Sent to Abutters of Hemlock Park Drive

- Administrator Steeves reported that a letter was sent to all four abutters along Hemlock Park Drive reminding them that any work within a wetland or buffer zone must be permitted through the office. The letter also served as a cease-and-desist and asked that anyone who has done work contact her office to set up a meeting with the Commission.

Open Space and Recreation Plan Update

- Administrator Steeves reported that the bidding process is closed and that ten bids were received, all of which met the minimum requirements to move forward to technical review. Reviewers were asked to submit rankings by June 1. The evaluation group includes Administrator Steeves, Anna Eliot, Takashi Tada, Paul Funch, Adam Burnett, and a representative from the Stewardship Committee. Cost proposals will be opened after the technical ranking.

2.2 COMMITTEE UPDATES

Sargisson Beach

- Commissioner Hurley reported that the committee met the prior Saturday and removed old kayaks remaining from past permits. The kayaks were brought to DPW where they

are held for owners to claim or to be auctioned as abandoned property. Sign-ups for the kayak rack are going smoothly, and a beach cleanup was completed. The buoys marking the swimming area are waiting on the lake level to rise so the pontoon boat can be launched to place them.

Stewardship Committee

- Commissioner Lathrop reported that a healthy ash tree was discovered at the Eliades conservation area and reported to the state. The committee also walked the Eliades field near Smith Street to assess mowing, found few invasives, and plans to address invasives around the edges and leave the field for the year.

2.3 LAND MANAGEMENT & ACQUISITION

Vernal pool certification off Sand Hill Road

- Administrator Steeves reported that the vernal pool off Sand Hill Road is officially certified and that the paperwork is expected in August.

Rocky Hill Turtle Nesting Site

- It was reported that a letter from Bob Collins proposes a \$10,000 endowment for the site. Commissioner Lathrop recommended waiting until the cost of the Academy Hill restoration is known before deciding on an appropriate amount.

Turtle Habitat at Academy Hill

- Chair Easom and Commissioner Lathrop reported that the southern turtle nesting habitat at Academy Hill is overgrown and is no longer functioning, with little maintenance done in years. Administrator Steeves reported that the Commission is responsible for contracting a herpetologist, with funds coming from the homeowners association escrow (understood to be about \$50,000), which the association is required to refill.
- The Commission agreed to contact Natural Heritage to determine the extent before getting quotes, and also to get quotes from at least three vendors.

Crosswinds Field Mowing

- The Commission discussed if it is required to mow the Crosswinds field. It was decided that the matter will be reviewed during the June 6 site walk.

Hallett Land Survey

- Commissioner Lathrop asked for an update on the survey of the Hallett land, and Administrator Steeves noted that it is on her list.

Walker Property Pile

- Administrator Steeves reported that there has been no response yet from DPW regarding the pile of material on the Walker property. She will follow up with the Town Manager.

Eliades Dumping on Pacer Way

- The Commission discussed the dumping of grass clippings and yard waste was found in the wetland on the Eliades property near Pacer Way.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to direct Administrator Steeves to send a letter to the property owners on Pacer Way reminding them that dumping on Commission conservation land is not permitted, including grass clippings.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

2.4 APPROVE MEETING MINUTES

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of May 12, 2026, as amended.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

2.5 APPROVE INVOICES

- No invoices were discussed.

2.6 ONGOING ISSUES

- At the applicant's request, the Commission approved the Orders of Conditions for 16 Longley Road (see the 16 Longley Road hearing item above).
- Chair Easom noted that a recent bylaw Order of Conditions contained only seven special conditions when more had been expected, and asked Administrator Steeves to review older bylaw Orders of Conditions and report back at the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

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

APPROVED: 6/23/2026