



Conservation Commission Meeting
Tuesday, June 9, 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, 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.

1. APPOINTMENTS AND HEARINGS

6:30 PM: Public Hearing- Request for Determination of Applicability- 104 Mill Street

- **Proposal:** Request for Determination of Applicability for repairs, tree removal, knotweed removal, fencing, foundation work, and future driveway paving.
- **Presentation:** The applicant reported that the property was recently purchased and that several repairs are planned, both interior and exterior. Phase one is removal of knotweed using the cut-and-drip method for the larger stand and a foliar spray over the septic system. The applicant also proposes removing several pine and maple trees overhanging the garage, installing a fence, doing minor excavation at the rear of the house to repair the foundation, and eventually paving the existing gravel driveway on the same footprint. Straw wattles or similar erosion controls would be installed during foundation work. The applicant has also asked the water department about a future connection to the sanitary sewer district.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioner Hurley had no concerns with the tree removal or knotweed removal and supported the future sewer connection. He noted the 100-foot buffer zone is close to the house.
 - Commissioner Morrison agreed and noted that paving the driveway may be an improvement for runoff compared to the existing dense grade surface.
 - Commissioner Wolfe asked about the fence location, noting that it appears to go into the 50-foot buffer. The applicant agreed to pull it inside the two maples shown on the plan. Commissioner Wolfe also noted the wetland boundary on the plan was taken from the GIS/DEP layer and is not a field-delineated line.

- Commissioner Lathrop asked that the plan be dated, signed, and include a scale. He noted the need for erosion controls on the far side of the driveway during debris removal to prevent material from reaching the wetland, and that work should not start until erosion controls have been inspected and approved by the Administrator.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to issue a negative three Determination, finding the work is within the buffer zone but will not alter the area subject to protection, subject to the following conditions: proper erosion controls to prevent migration of material into the resource area, demolition must be done so as to prevent debris from entering the resource area, and work shall not start until erosion controls have been inspected and found acceptable by the Administrator.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Negative Determination issued with conditions. The applicant was advised to use biodegradable straw wattles and to contact Administrator Steeves for inspection before beginning work.

6:45 PM: Continued Public Hearing- Retroactive Notice of Intent- 60 Valley Road- DEP# 169-1296

- **Proposal:** Retroactive Notice of Intent for unpermitted work in a vegetated wetland.
- **Presentation:** The applicant's representative, a wetland scientist, was not present and requested a continuance. A DEP file number has been received. Natural Heritage responded with a no-take determination.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioner Hurley recused himself as an abutter.
 - Commissioner Morrison reported from the site walk that the silt fence is not properly staked and is floppy underneath, with room for animals to pass under. The straw wattles were not properly installed and have gaps where they are not in full contact with the ground. He also reported that the applicant stated he wants to build a gate on the property.
 - Commissioner Lathrop reported that the area appeared to have been filled, noting the tops of still-green ferns buried under what looked like fresh material. He also noted two stone pillars that were constructed without a permit within the 50-foot buffer zone. He recommended a \$50 fine for unpermitted work and that the applicant be required to file a new Notice of Intent for the pillars before the next meeting to avoid additional daily fines.
 - Commissioner Morrison agreed with fining for the pillars. He noted that if the Commission disapproves of the pillars through the Order of Conditions process, the applicant would have to remove them. He did not support fining for the filling at this time, as it may be related to the existing wetland restoration filing.
 - Commissioner Wolfe had concern that the applicant continues to do unpermitted work and then add items retroactively, and supported using fines to get the applicant's attention.

- Commissioner Hurley, though recused, noted from the original site walk that the material may be wood chips from the earlier chipping and may not be new filling. Commissioner Lathrop disagreed based on the green ferns that he observed on Saturday.
- Chair Easom agreed that the pillars should be treated as a separate issue from the restoration NOI. He supported issuing a \$50 fine for the pillars.
- Commissioner Lathrop also had concern about the amount of stone/gravel placed around the property, which did not appear to have been permitted under the original RDA for the house reconstruction. Administrator Steeves agreed to review the original RDA to determine what was permitted.
- Commissioner Wolfe asked about the collapsed culvert. Commissioner Hurley noted it was likely damaged by construction equipment and recommended it be repaired with headwalls at both ends. Commissioner Lathrop suggested the culvert repair could be rolled into the restoration NOI. Commissioner Morrison agreed and wanted headwalls at both ends.
- **Motion (Fine):** A motion was made and seconded to issue a \$50 fine for unpermitted work within the buffer zone (the two stone pillars), and to require a new Notice of Intent filing for the pillars by the Monday before the next meeting in order to avoid additional fines.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously. Commissioner Hurley recused.
- **Motion:** A second motion was made and seconded to continue the retroactive Notice of Intent for 60 Valley Road to June 23, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously. Commissioner Hurley recused.
- **Outcome:** A \$50 fine issued for unpermitted construction of two stone pillars. A new Notice of Intent for the pillars is required before the next meeting. Administrator Steeves to review the original RDA regarding the gravel/stone placement. Retroactive Notice of Intent continued to June 23, 2026.

7:00 PM: Request for Determination of Applicability- Off Baddacook Pond Road

- **Proposal:** Request for Determination of Applicability for tree removal and debris removal.
- **Presentation:** The applicant reported that the property has been purchased and plans are underway for rebuilding. A contractor has been selected for debris removal who has experience with similar fire-damaged properties. Tree removal and debris removal are being handled first, with a separate Notice of Intent to follow for the septic design and house construction. The applicant plans to replant with native trees rather than pines. The contractor plans to minimize dust during demolition by misting with water.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioner Wolfe asked about the logistics of getting trucks onto the site and confirmed that the contractor has a plan for debris removal. He had no further questions.

- Commissioner Hurley supported splitting the work into two phases (RDA for tree and debris removal, then NOI for construction). He advised that the applicant mark the corners of the existing structure before demolition so the footprint can be rebuilt in the same location.
- Commissioner Morrison had no concerns with the tree removal or debris removal.
- Commissioner Lathrop asked that the plan be dated, signed, and include a scale. He noted the need for erosion controls on the far side of the driveway to prevent material from reaching the wetland near Baddacook Pond.
- Administrator Steeves confirmed the conditions would include erosion controls and that demolition must be done so as to prevent debris from entering the resource area.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to issue a negative three Determination, finding that the work is within the buffer zone but will not change the area subject to protection, subject to the following conditions: proper erosion controls to prevent migration of material into the resource area, demolition must be done so as to prevent debris from entering the resource area, and the work shall not start until erosion controls have been inspected and found to be correct by the Administrator.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Commissioner Hurley recused. Motion carried.
- **Outcome:** Negative Determination issued with conditions. Applicant advised to use biodegradable straw wattles.

7:10 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:** Administrator Steeves reported that the Town wants to go forward with a new plan, likely scaled back from the previous proposal, but she does not have plans or a timeline. A member of the working group reported that the group is meeting on Monday to make decisions related to reducing the scope, going with the original plan, or scratching the project entirely. The project is currently still active.
- **Discussion:**
 - Chair Easom noted that the CPC discussed the project the prior evening and that it remains under consideration for fall Town Meeting.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing to June 23, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Public hearing continued to June 23, 2026.

7:15 PM: Issue Order of Conditions- Squannacook River Dam- DEP# 169-1294

- **Proposal:** Issue Orders of Conditions for repairs to the Squannacook River Dam, even though it had been voted down at the previous town meeting.
- **Presentation:** The representative reported that the Town of Shirley has closed its hearing and issued an Order of Conditions. A DEP number and a letter from Natural Heritage have been received. The representative noted that Shirley's order has been issued but he has not yet received a copy. The representative stated that this process was being completed, "just in case."
- **Discussion:**
 - Chair Easom noted the goal is to issue an order that does not conflict with Shirley's. Administrator Steeves confirmed that Shirley's special conditions were drafted from Groton's draft and should match.
 - Commissioner Morrison read through the special conditions.
- **Motion (Wetlands Protection Act):** 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 50, including condition 49 requiring that water levels existing immediately prior to the dam repairs be restored upon completion, and condition 50 requiring submission of a request for certificate of compliance, an as-built plan, and removal of all erosion controls.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Motion (Bylaw):** A motion was made and seconded to issue an Order of Conditions under the Groton Wetlands Protection Bylaw, incorporating conditions 1 through 8, including condition 8 requiring that water levels existing immediately prior to the dam repairs be restored upon completion.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Orders of Conditions issued under both the Wetlands Protection Act and the Groton Wetlands Protection Bylaw.

7:50 PM: Issue Order of Conditions- 91 Chicopee Row

- **Proposal:** Issue Orders of Conditions for 91 Chicopee Row.
- **Presentation:** Commissioner Morrison read through the special conditions.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioner Lathrop noted that the Order of Conditions had been added to the shared drive on the day of the meeting without notification. He requested that in the future, if anything is added to the drive on the day of the meeting, an email be sent to notify the Commission. Administrator Steeves agreed.
 - Commissioner Lathrop also confirmed that condition 50 correctly specifies the no-disturb markers to be spaced no more than 50 feet apart. A copy/paste error on page five referencing a different address and DEP number was identified and corrected.
- **Motion (Wetlands Protection Act):** 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 50, with condition 50 requiring conservation no-

disturb markers to be installed at the 90-foot contour line at a minimum of 12 inches above grade and spaced no more than 50 feet apart, in perpetuity, and any broken or damaged markers to be replaced as needed in perpetuity.

- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Motion (Bylaw):** A motion was made and seconded to issue an Order of Conditions under the Groton Wetlands Protection Bylaw, incorporating conditions 1 through 9, with conditions 8 and 9 requiring conservation no-disturb markers in perpetuity.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Orders of Conditions issued under both the Wetlands Protection Act and the Groton Wetlands Protection Bylaw.

Discussion- Hemlock Park Drive

- **Presentation:** Three residents of Hemlock Park Drive appeared regarding the cease-and-desist letter that the Commission had sent at the prior meeting. The residents reported that they have been maintaining the road (grading, smoothing ruts, filling potholes) and that a neighbor has been undoing their maintenance work. They disputed that any work was done beyond the scope of regular road maintenance and stated they have not widened the road.
- **Discussion:**
 - Administrator Steeves confirmed that the letter went to all residents along Hemlock Park Drive, including the neighbor in question. She noted that normal maintenance of the road is exempt under the water department conservation restriction. Portions of the road falls within the 100-foot buffer zone.
 - The Commission agreed that filling potholes is considered normal road maintenance and does not require a permit. Trimming of vegetation was discussed, with Commissioner Lathrop, Commissioner Morrison, and Commissioner Wolfe recommending the residents hold off on trimming bushes until the Commission can visit the site.
 - The Commission discussed access to the private road. Commissioner Morrison noted the Commission does not have an order of conditions on this property and does not have the right to enter and inspect. Commissioner Lathrop suggested the residents could invite the Commission under their access easement, but Chair Easom preferred to seek permission from the landowner before walking the road. Chair Easom proposed meeting at the public cul-de-sac at noon on Saturday to observe what is visible from there, and separately reaching out to the landowner for permission to walk the road itself.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Chair to observe the roadway and vegetation from the public way and make a determination on the course of action.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

- **Outcome:** Chair Easom to visit the site on Saturday at noon, observing from the cul-de-sac. He will separately request permission from the landowner to walk the private road. Residents may fill potholes in the meantime but should hold off on trimming vegetation.
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2. GENERAL BUSINESS

2.1 GENERAL DISCUSSIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Shepley Hill Conservation Restriction

- Chair Easom reported that a site walk was held on Saturday. At the site walk, the applicant's representative asked whether the Commission would be offended if the Shepley Hill conservation restriction were offered to a different qualified organization rather than the Conservation Commission. The Commission indicated it has no objection to a different qualified party having the conservation restriction.
- Commissioner Morrison noted that he had never heard of forming a new entity for the specific purpose of holding a conservation restriction. Chair Easom noted the state has requirements that organizations must meet to be eligible to hold conservation restrictions.
- Administrator Steeves agreed to notify the applicant's representative that the Commission would prefer not to hold this conservation restriction and has no objection to another qualified party holding it.

Equestrian Crossing at 129 Longley Road

- **Presentation:** A resident appeared and reported that she has created a 20-foot strip between her property and her neighbor's and would like to change an existing trail easement granted to the Groton Conservation Trust to allow a trail crossing of a wetland. She proposed moving stones from an existing century-old stone crossing to create a pedestrian crossing at a new location, and also requested that horses be allowed to cross (without using the stones).
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioner Hurley and Commissioner Morrison had no concerns. Commissioner Lathrop recommended the resident file an RDA, after which the Commission would schedule a site walk.
 - Administrator Steeves confirmed that an RDA is the appropriate filing. A representative from the Groton Conservation Trust was present and noted that the Trust is supportive.
- **Outcome:** The resident was advised to file an RDA. A site walk will be scheduled after the filing is received.

8:45 PM Discussion- 24 Island Pond Road

- **Presentation:** A resident appeared electronically to discuss a proposed accessory dwelling unit at 24 Island Pond Road. The resident was experiencing audio difficulties, so Administrator Steeves provided an overview: there is a stream in the back of the property, and the proposed addition would likely be within the riverfront area. An existing order of conditions from approximately 2005 is on file but the special conditions could not be located.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioner Morrison recommended an RDA. Commissioner Lathrop noted it may require a Notice of Intent depending on if the stream is perennial or intermittent, and suggested that the resident check if the stream appears on the USGS map.
- **Outcome:** Administrator Steeves will follow up with the resident on Monday to discuss next steps, including if the stream is shown on the USGS map.

Update: 65 West Main Street

- Administrator Steeves reported that the property owner came in and paid the \$50 fine. He was remorseful and did not realize he had cut over the property line onto Commission land. He is in the process of getting a professional restoration plan, which must be approved by the Commission before planting.

Conservation Commission Reorganization

- Chair Easom announced that his term as Chair ends on June 30 and that he does not plan to run for Chair again. The Commission discussed potential candidates. Commissioner Hurley stated that he would be willing to serve as Chair if needed. The Commission agreed to defer the vote to the next meeting when all members are present.

Potential interviews for Open Space Recreation Plan Finalists

- Administrator Steeves reported that all ten proposals met the minimum criteria. After scoring, four firms are closely ranked, and she recommended conducting interviews with those four finalists. She asked if the Commission would like to hold the interviews during the next meeting and if the Park Commission should be invited. The Commission agreed that the evaluation committee should handle the interviews and report back with a recommendation.

2.2 COMMITTEE UPDATES

Stewardship Committee

- Commissioner Lathrop reported that the Stewardship Committee walked the Longley Estates conservation area and encountered a resident mowing an area that appeared to be on conservation land. The resident stated he had a letter from a former town employee dating to approximately 2014 authorizing the mowing. Administrator Steeves agreed to locate the letter and determine what was agreed to.

Invasive Species Committee

- The Invasive Species Committee reported treating knotweed and bittersweet at the end of Hayden Road and at Nipmuck Meadows with a low-concentration triclopyr spray.

2.3 LAND MANAGEMENT & ACQUISITION

Rocky Hill and Academy Hill Turtle Nesting Sites

- Administrator Steeves reported that she reached out to Natural Heritage for a signed copy of the conservation management permit but has not heard back.
- Chair Easom reported that the conservation restriction language requires a \$53,000 fund for maintenance of the turtle nesting sites and fencing, to be used only if the homeowners association does not perform the required maintenance. The fund was also to retain \$25,000 for a required turtle study between 10 and 15 years after completion of the subdivision. He reported the fund appears to have been depleted below \$25,000 and the Commission needs to determine who controls the fund and obtain a ledger.
- Commissioner Lathrop noted that nothing should have been spent from the escrow fund.
- Rocky Hill was visited during the site walk and appeared to be in compliance.

Proposals for Survey at Hallett Conservation Area Boundary

- Administrator Steeves reported she has received one survey proposal (from GPR) and one expression of interest (from Dillis and Roy) to determine the boundary line at the Hallett Conservation Area. A third firm has not responded.
- Commissioner Lathrop reviewed the GPR proposal and confirmed it appears to be bidding the correct scope. Commissioner Wolfe noted a spelling error in the proposal.

Crosswinds Mowing

- Chair Easom reported from the site walk that the Crosswinds conservation area is due to be mowed. The conservation restriction or wildlife habitat improvement plan may

require keeping the area in early successional habitat, with anything over an inch and a half in diameter to be cut. The Commission needs to confirm the requirement and coordinate mowing.

Nipmuck Meadows

- Commissioner Lathrop reported that the Groton Fire Department has expressed interest in burning the entire Nipmuck Meadows field, which would reduce the need for mowing. Burns are done early in the year before turtle nesting season. The Commission agreed to coordinate with the fire department.

1 Lost Lake Drive

- Administrator Steeves reported that she is working on identifying the correct property owner(s) for a letter REGARDING THE TURTLE NESTING AREA. Commissioner Lathrop identified what appear to be three different owners. The Commission agreed that all owners need to be notified.

2.4 APPROVE MEETING MINUTES

- No minutes were presented for approval.

2.5 APPROVE INVOICES

- No invoices were discussed.

2.6 ONGOING ISSUES

- The Commission reviewed the ongoing issues punch list. The following updates were noted:
 - 309 Boston Road: The property owner did not pay the fine or appeal the ticket. Administrator Steeves reported a hearing has been scheduled in district court for July.
 - 210 Indian Hill Road: Commissioner Wolfe reported that new owners are mowing to the conservation posts. No longer an active issue.
 - Westford Sportsman's Club: Administrator Steeves emailed the state contact, Mike Gundren, to set up a meeting. Chair Easom confirmed that Mike is the decision maker at EEA for approving conservation restriction language.
 - Brownloaf land: The Commission discussed pursuing a warrant article for fall Town Meeting to transfer the parcel. Administrator Steeves to discuss with the Town Manager.

- 87 Maplewood Avenue: The property owner never refiled. Removed from the list.
- 30 Brit Lane: Administrator Steeves to send a letter requesting permission to inspect the restoration plantings.
- Groton Hill Music Center stonewall: Wildlife passage has been installed. Removed from the list.
- Shepley Hill: Removed from the list.
- Sand Hill Road vernal pool: Certification confirmed. Removed from the list.
- Marsh Lewis baseline report: Woodman Inc. was hired but has not delivered the report. Administrator Steeves to follow up.
- Quail Ridge: Commissioner Lathrop reported that he observed a mowing height difference between the property and Commission land and will continue to monitor.
- Nipmuck Meadows encroachment: Letter was sent in September but no follow-up received. A site walk was recommended.
- Boathouse Road: Commissioner Wolfe to check on the required plantings.
- Gratuity Road: Removed from the list.
- Northwood Road: A letter was sent.
- 54 Hill Road: Waiting to hear from legal.

ADJOURNMENT

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

APPROVED: 7/14/26