



Conservation Commission Meeting
Tuesday, June 23, 2026 at 6:30 PM
Town Hall: Second Floor Meeting Room
173 Main Street Groton, MA
OPTION TO JOIN REMOTELY



Present: Chair: Bruce Easom, John Smigelski, Larry Hurley, Olin Lathrop, 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: Continued Public Hearing- Request for Determination of Applicability- 104 Mill Street

- **Proposal:** Continuation of the Request for Determination of Applicability for repairs, tree removal, knotweed removal, fencing, foundation work, and future driveway paving.
- **Presentation:** The applicant reported that the Commission visited the property on Saturday and the wetland flags were reviewed. The wetland boundary was adjusted closer to the house after an auger test confirmed the soil conditions. The applicant is requesting the same scope of work as previously discussed and asked for direction on the fence location.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioner Lathrop stated that he would be comfortable with temporary disturbance in the buffer for the foundation work, as long as the area is restored to a natural state afterward. He asked the applicant to keep the fence inside the two maples shown on the plan.
 - Commissioner Hurley supported the scope and noted that the fence location looked reasonable. He asked the applicant to keep erosion controls in place during the foundation work.
 - Commissioner Wolfe asked about the fence and noted that the wetland boundary on the plan was taken from the GIS/DEP layer and is not a field-delineated line. The applicant confirmed that the fence would be pulled inside the two maples.
 - Commissioner Lathrop asked that the plan be dated, signed, and to include a scale. He noted there is a need for erosion controls 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, with the following conditions: proper erosion controls to prevent material from entering the resource area, demolition must be done so as to prevent debris from entering the resource area, work shall not start until erosion controls have been inspected and found satisfactory by the Administrator, and no additional trees beyond those indicated on the plan shall be removed without returning to the Commission.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Negative Determination issued with conditions. Public hearing closed.

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, Matt Marro (wetland scientist), appeared electronically. He reported that a DEP file number has been received and that Natural Heritage responded with a no-take determination. The representative described the restoration plan as removal of invasive vegetation and allowing the native vegetation to naturally grow. He noted that replanting could cause more harm than good in this type of wetland and that the area is already regenerating on its own. He recommended semi-annual monitoring reports over the full three-year permit term. The \$50 fine from the prior meeting will be paid. A second Notice of Intent has been filed for the stone pillars and other site work, with hard copies sent to DEP and to Administrator Steeves.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioner Hurley recused himself as an abutter. He noted from the original site walk that some of the material observed may be wood chips from earlier chipping rather than new filling.
 - Commissioner Lathrop requested three monitoring reports per growing season (beginning, middle, and end) instead of two given the sensitivity of the site and the proximity to endangered species habitat. The representative agreed. Commissioner Lathrop also stated that he was comfortable with direct application of herbicides but not spraying, given the drainage into Whitney Pond and the nearby wells. He noted that the restoration will likely take longer than three years and suggested that the order include a condition requiring monitoring until the vegetation has recovered, potentially as a five-year order or with an in-perpetuity condition that sunsets when certain criteria are met.
 - Chair Easom agreed that the restoration plan discussed would meet Natural Heritage's requirements as well as the Commission's, and that long-term monitoring would provide confidence the area will recover.
 - A member of the public spoke in support of the representative.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to close the public hearing.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously. Commissioner Hurley recused.

- **Outcome:** Public hearing closed. Administrator Steeves to draft the Order of Conditions incorporating three monitoring reports per growing season, no spraying of herbicides, and a monitoring period extending beyond three years until vegetation has recovered. The second Notice of Intent for the stone pillars and other site work will be discussed at a future meeting.

7:05 PM: Request for Determination of Applicability- 10 Bayberry Road

- **Proposal:** Request for Determination of Applicability for removal of several trees.
- **Presentation:** The applicant appeared with a map showing the trees proposed for removal, including dead pines and a cherry tree. The applicant plans to leave snags for wildlife habitat where possible.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioner Lathrop recused himself as an abutter.
 - Commissioner Hurley supported the tree removal and had no concerns.
 - Commissioner Wolfe noted that the applicant's plan was well done and asked about access for equipment. He confirmed the trees are close to the house and can be reached without disturbing the wetland.
 - Administrator Steeves noted that bittersweet may start growing in the opened area once the trees are removed and recommended the applicant address it early.
 - Chair Easom asked that only trees indicated on the plan be removed and that the applicant return to the Commission before removing any additional trees.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to issue a negative three Determination subject to the following conditions: leave snags for wildlife habitat, and only trees indicated on the plan may be removed.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried. Commissioner Lathrop recused.
- **Outcome:** Negative Determination issued with conditions.

7:20 PM: Notice of Intent- 716 Martins Pond Road- DEP# PENDING

- **Proposal:** Notice of Intent for sewage disposal system construction.
- **Presentation:** No representative was present. The applicant requested a continuance. Administrator Steeves reported the applicant does not yet have a DEP number and is waiting for a Board of Health opinion.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue to July 14, 2026.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Continued to July 14, 2026.

7:30 PM: Request for Extension Order of Conditions- 65 Rawding Rd- DEP# 169-1259

- **Proposal:** Request for a three-year extension of the Order of Conditions.
- **Presentation:** No representative was present. Administrator Steeves reported that the original order, approved in 2023, included demolition and reconstruction of two residential dwellings and associated decking, driveways, and landscape areas. The current order expires July 25, 2026. She noted that some changes have been made to the approved plans, including an increased patio area with permeable pavers and a stepped walkway added to provide access down a steep slope toward the water. The applicant submitted a minor change request but no plans were included.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioner Lathrop stated that the extension and the minor change are two separate issues. He supported approving the extension, but he wanted to see a proper application with plans before approving the minor change.
 - Commissioner Smigelski agreed and recommended that the applicant come in to present the minor change.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to extend the Order of Conditions for three years to July 25, 2029.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Extension approved. The applicant was asked to submit a minor change request with plans and to appear before the Commission.

7:40 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:** The Chairman of the Park Commission reported that the Park Commission voted to bring a scaled back proposal to fall Town Meeting at approximately four million dollars or less, which would still qualify for the CPA funding and the one million dollar state recreation grant. The CPC voted to support the application as an out-of-cycle submission.
- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioner Lathrop recommended that the applicant withdraw the current Notice of Intent and refile when the new scope is determined, since the NOI process is not designed for large changes to a filed plan. He noted that Natural Heritage has already weighed in on the original proposal.
 - Chair Easom noted that withdrawing and refileing would allow the Commission to make a public statement before the new hearing about if it supports the project, which some town meeting members may find helpful.
 - The Chairman of the Park Commission asked the Commission to keep the hearing open for now, noting that the Park Commission has not finalized the plan. She described the reduced scope which would include relocating the baseball field and addressing parking and stormwater but just at a lower cost.

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing for Cow Pond Brook Playing Fields.
 - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
 - **Outcome:** Public hearing continued to July 14, 2026.
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2. GENERAL BUSINESS

2.1 GENERAL DISCUSSIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Update: 65 West Main Street

- Administrator Steeves reported that the property owner paid the \$50 fine but did not comply with the enforcement order by the June 22 deadline. He was required to submit a restoration plan and did not. Administrator Steeves reported that she emailed him twice: once on the Friday before the deadline offering more time if he provided an update, and again on Monday after the deadline. He responded to the first email but did not give a clear answer, and did not respond to the second.
- Administrator Steeves recommended issuing a \$100 fine for failure to comply with the enforcement order.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to issue a \$100 fine to the owner of 65 West Main Street for failure to comply with the enforcement order.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** \$100 fine issued. The fine is payable within 21 days.

Discussion: Gate at Cow Pond playing fields

- The Chairman of the Park Commission asked if the gate to the baseball fields could remain open until town meeting, given the parking and safety concerns during the baseball and soccer seasons.
- Commissioner Lathrop noted that the gate should have been locked since 2009 and that leaving it open during turtle migration season is the core concern. He proposed allowing the gate to be unlocked on weekends only, with a turtle monitor present the entire time the gate is open, through the end of October 2026. On weekdays the gate would remain locked, and starting in 2027 the Commission intends to enforce the full terms.
- Commissioner Smigelski supported meeting the Park Commission in the middle, noting that the Commission shares responsibility for not enforcing the original determination sooner.
- Commissioner Hurley supported and noted that turtle monitors could be volunteers, parents, or user group members.

- Commissioner Wolfe asked how the Commission would verify that a turtle monitor is present each weekend. Commissioner Lathrop stated that responsibility falls to the Park Commission.
- Chair Easom suggested that he could volunteer as a turtle monitor on Saturdays and encouraged the Park Commission to organize volunteers for other days.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to allow the Park Commission to unlock the gate on weekends only, with a turtle monitor present the entire time the gate is open, through the end of October 2026. On weekdays the gate remains locked.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** The Park Commission will follow the set condition regarding the gate.

Hemlock Park Drive Update

- Chair Easom reported that he and Commissioner Lathrop visited Hemlock Park Drive on Saturday as authorized at the last meeting. They met with the residents and observed the road from the public cul-de-sac with the landowner's permission.
- Chair Easom reported that there is a wooden fence along one side of the road. They measured 22 feet from the fence, and determined that vegetation trimming within 22 feet of the fence would be considered normal road maintenance and would not require filing. Trimming beyond 22 feet would be closer to the wetland and would require the residents to come before the Commission. Filling potholes was confirmed as maintenance.
- Commissioner Lathrop took photographs and measurements for future reference in case the road changes.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to ratify the Chair's determination that vegetation trimming within 22 feet of the fence is maintenance and does not require filing, and that trimming beyond 22 feet requires Commission review.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Determination ratified. Administrator Steeves to send a letter to all Hemlock Park Drive residents summarizing the determination, including that filling potholes is maintenance and vegetation trimming within 22 feet of the fence does not require filing.

Reorganization of Conservation Commission

- Chair Easom announced that his term as Chair ends June 30 and that he does not plan to continue as Chair.
- Commissioner Smigelski was nominated and elected Chair, effective July 1, 2026, for a period of one year. All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- Commissioner Wolfe was nominated and elected Vice Chair, effective July 1, 2026, for a period of one year. All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- Commissioner Easom was nominated and elected Clerk, effective July 1, 2026, for a period of one year. All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

Interviews scheduled for OSRP finalists

- Administrator Steeves reported that the four finalists' scores were too close to select a winner, so the subcommittee will conduct interviews on Thursday morning starting at 10 AM in the meeting room. Commissioners were invited to attend.

Walker Cox Conservation Land (Chicopee Row)

- Representatives of the Groton Conservation Trust appeared regarding stockpiled material on conservation land near Chicopee Row. The parcel is owned by the Commission with a conservation restriction held by the Trust.
- Chair Easom reported that material excavated during the Water Department's water line installation along Chicopee Row was stockpiled on the adjacent private parcel under an agreement with the Water Department, but some of the material ended up on the Commission's conservation land. The stockpiled material appears to have been partially removed, but the area was cleared and needs restoration.
- Commissioner Smigelski suggested checking if a topsoil pile on the site could be spread back and seeded.
- Commissioner Wolfe recommended planting native species such as sweet fern and little bluestem grass and requested a long-term plan for the site.
- Commissioner Lathrop noted that the Commission has raised this issue with the Water Department informally multiple times since 2025 and has received no response. He recommended issuing an enforcement order to start a formal paper trail.
- Commissioner Hurley supported finding the responsible party and having them restore the site.
- The Trust representative confirmed the Trust supports an enforcement order and noted that the Trust would have started legal action already if this involved a private landowner. The Trust asked to be copied on the enforcement order.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to issue an enforcement order to the Water Department for unauthorized clearing of conservation land, requiring a response by July 13, 2026 with a restoration plan or a schedule for commissioning one.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** Enforcement order to be issued to the Water Department. Administrator Steeves to notify the Town Manager.

309 Boston Road unpaid Enforcement Order ticket

- Administrator Steeves reported that the property owner has not paid the outstanding fine and did not request a hearing within the 21-day appeal period. Multiple fines have been issued over the past several months with no compliance.
- The Commission discussed escalating the matter. Commissioner Hurley suggested consulting town counsel about continuing it as a civil matter, as additional fines do not seem to be effective. Commissioner Smigelski and Commissioner Lathrop agreed.

Commissioner Lathrop noted that town counsel had already provided an opinion on this several months ago.

- **Outcome:** Administrator Steeves to find a prior opinion letter from town counsel on this matter and share it with the Commission at the next meeting before any further action is taken.

Joe Nutile Property Site Walk at 0 Hill Road

- Administrator Steeves reported that the property owner's son came in and requested a site walk. The property owner would prefer only a few Commission members attend. Chair Easom and Commissioner Lathrop agreed to go. The site walk was tentatively scheduled for July 11 at 8 AM, separate from the regular site walk schedule.

2.2 COMMITTEE UPDATES

Community Preservation Committee

- Chair Easom reported that the CPC has an opening for the at-large position previously held by Carolyn Perkins with two applicants. The position should be filled within one to two weeks. The CPC is also redrafting the community preservation plan. Chair Easom encouraged the Commission to consider applying for FY 2028 CPA funds, noting that the Commission deferred its FY 2027 request and that two major CPA applications (Cow Pond Brook and the Squannacook River Dam) were defeated at town meeting.

Stewardship Committee

- Commissioner Lathrop reported the that Stewardship Committee will hold a site walk at Ames Meadow on Thursday, July 2 at 3 PM, meeting at the Town Forest parking lot.

Sargisson Beach

- Commissioner Hurley reported that a trash issue at the beach was traced to the portable toilet cleaning service, not to beachgoers. The police reviewed camera footage and confirmed this. There have also been issues with jet skis and noise. The committee is working with the town to adjust the ranger's schedule to cover weekends. The grills on site need to be refurbished and in the meantime, people may bring portable grills as long as they remove everything when they leave.

2.3 LAND MANAGEMENT & ACQUISITION

Audubon Turtle Nesting Site

- A letter from Bob Collins was reviewed proposing \$10,000 for the Rocky Hill turtle nesting site. Commissioner Lathrop noted that no justification was provided for why the amount should be less than the \$11,000 at Hayes Woods, especially when costs have increased. He recommended waiting until the cost of the Academy Hill restoration is known before setting an amount, and noted that \$10,000 is likely too low unless a replenishment clause is included.
- The Commission also discussed who would be responsible and if a neighborhood association exists. The matter was tabled pending clarification.

Proposals for Survey at Hallett Conservation Area Boundary

- GPR submitted a proposal for \$14,300, including survey and installation of granite bounds.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to authorize Administrator Steeves to accept GPR's proposal for \$14,300 for surveying and installing granite bounds at the Hallett Conservation Area boundary.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Outcome:** GPR authorized to proceed.

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.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of May 26, 2026, as amended.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

2.5 APPROVE INVOICES

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to authorize payment of the MACC annual dues in the amount of \$783.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to authorize payment of the Groton Herald invoice in the amount of \$53.75.
- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

2.6 ONGOING ISSUES

- The Commission skipped the ongoing issues review.
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ADJOURNMENT

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

APPROVED: 7/28/2026