



GROTON STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

Virtual Meeting (Zoom)
August 20, 2025 – 6:30 PM

The meeting was opened at 6:30 PM.

1. INTRODUCTIONS:

- **Present at the meeting:**
 - Charlotte Steeves – Conservation Administrator
 - Olin Lathrop – Conservation Commission/Invasive Species Committee/Stewardship Committee
 - Anna Elliot – Parks Commission/Stewardship Committee
 - Benjamin Wolfe – Invasive Species Committee Conservation Commission
 - Alex Lewis
- Introductions were held for new and returning members.
- Ben introduced himself as a member of the Invasive Species Committee and shared his interest in joining the Stewardship Committee. Alex also introduced himself and shared his interest in town conservation work, noting that his background is primarily outside of ecology but that he has developed a strong interest in land stewardship and conservation in recent years.

2. COMMITTEE UPDATES:

Committee Overview and Purpose

- A discussion was held regarding the role and purpose of the Stewardship Committee. It was explained that the Stewardship Committee is a subcommittee of the Conservation Commission and is responsible for land management-related matters, including mowing plans, management plans, monitoring, and long-term stewardship of conservation-owned parcels and properties under conservation restriction.
- Members discussed the committee's recent practice of conducting site walks on parcels that have not been reviewed in some time. It was noted that inviting abutters to these

site walks has been valuable, as neighbors often provide useful observations regarding encroachments, invasive species, and site conditions.

- There was discussion of using the Stewardship Committee as a pipeline for future Conservation Commission membership. It was suggested that Stewardship Committee members who are interested in joining the Conservation Commission in the future could be supported through training opportunities, including attendance at Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC) conferences and workshops.
 - It was also noted that there are currently multiple applicants for an open Conservation Commission seat. Members encouraged continued involvement with the Stewardship Committee regardless of appointment outcomes.
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3. ON-GOING PROJECTS

Open Space Plan and Project Focus

- Discussion was held about the importance of aligning Stewardship Committee work with the Town's Open Space Plan. Two projects were identified for continued focus:
 - The Carrol Wheeler Park project and grant application
 - Invasive species encroachments

Coordination with Invasive Species Committee

- An update was provided on conservation land signs. Several new signs have been made and are currently held by the Trails Committee. Installation is pending approval from the Sign Committee, as required before placement.

Vegetation Management Plan Discussion

- An update was shared regarding discussions at the Invasive Species Committee related to the need for a town-wide Vegetation Management Plan. It was explained that such a plan is required under Massachusetts regulations for managing vegetation.
- Members discussed the potential to work on a Vegetation Management Plan as a winter project, with the Invasive Species Committee possibly drafting an initial plan and coordinating with DPW, Stewardship, Parks, and other boards. It was noted that the plan would be prepared for submission in a future year as the current deadline has passed.

Mowing Schedule

- Members reviewed the parcels that are routinely mowed by the Conservation Commission, including:
 - Eliades Conservation Area
 - Ames Meadow
 - Priest Hill
 - Nipmuc Meadows
 - O'Neill Way
- Members revisited the earlier agreement to take a closer look at parcels and come back with recommendations around mowing timing, frequency, and overall management goals. Due to scheduling and workload, that work has not yet been completed. The committee agreed that mowing will continue this year as it has in the past, with the intention of developing clearer, more informed recommendations for future seasons.
- Members also discussed the need to be clearer about the purpose of mowing on each parcel, including if the goal is to maintain open meadow, support wildlife habitat, or serve another conservation purpose, and agreed this will be part of the ongoing review.

Student Engagement Opportunities

- Members discussed potential opportunities to collaborate with local schools, including Groton School and Lawrence Academy, to involve students in conservation-related projects such as botanical surveys or site inventories.
- Ben volunteered to contact Groton School to explore potential opportunities for student involvement and will report back at the next meeting.

4. GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

Site Walk Scheduling

- The committee discussed resuming regular site walks. After discussion, the following site walk was scheduled:
 - Nipmuc Meadows
 - Saturday, September 13, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.
- It was noted that abutters will be notified by mail.

Scheduling Updates

- The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, September 17, 2025 at 6:30 PM, consistent with the committee's regular meeting schedule.
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5. ADJOURN

- The meeting was adjourned at 7:26 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Andrea Rollo, Per Diem Minute Taker

Approved: March 18th, 2026