



GROTON STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

December 17, 2025 – 6:30 PM

The meeting was opened at 6:30 PM.

1. INTRODUCTIONS:

- **Present at the meeting:**
 - Olin Lathrop – Conservation Commission/Invasive Species Committee/Stewardship Committee
 - Kim Kuliesis – Conservation Commission/Stewardship Committee
 - Benjamin Wolfe – Invasive Species Committee Conservation Commission
 - Adam Burnett – Stewardship Committee/Invasive Species Committee
 - Alex Lewis – Stewardship Committee
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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 continued 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.

3. ON-GOING PROJECTS

Overall Updates on Action Items

- Adam provided an update on his work related to Farmers and Mechanics. He shared that progress has been slower than anticipated due to recent travel and current weather conditions but stated that he is continuing to work on setting up the site visit and data collection.
- Ben provided an update on drafting project descriptions for potential student volunteers. He shared that he has developed an outline with ideas including turtle monitoring and follow-up plant monitoring at locations where knotweed treatments were previously conducted.
- Adam provided updates from a recent site walk where there was a house fire. He reported that debris was found primarily near the power line corridor toward the southern end of the parcel. During the walk, a significant amount of material was collected in a short period of time. The property owner was present and agreed to have a crew conduct a more thorough cleanup in the area between the access road, property line, and power line corridor. It was noted that it is unclear whether this cleanup occurred prior to snowfall.
- Members discussed that follow-up would be most effective after snow melt. Adam volunteered to return to the site once conditions improve to assess whether cleanup work was completed. Kim also agreed to visit the site as needed.
- During this discussion, members also briefly revisited observations of potential turtle nesting activity in the area, noting that disturbed soil consistent with nesting had been observed.

Carrol Wheeler Park Grant Application

- Members discussed that they have begun drafting the application and working through questions related to the appropriate level of detail, including photos, diagrams, and site descriptions.
- The deadline for the application was discussed, with members noting it is likely in mid-January to early February. Concern was raised about timing, particularly the need for Parks Commission endorsement, given holiday schedules and meeting cycles.

- It was proposed that members be authorized to move forward with preparing and submitting the grant, including coordinating with the Parks Commission for required approvals, in order to avoid missing the deadline.
- Members discussed the scope of the proposed grant, which would focus on invasive species removal at Carrol Wheeler Park and restoration using native plantings. It was noted that the majority of funding would likely be used for plants, seedlings, and materials, with a smaller portion potentially allocated for herbicide and supplies. The use of containerized plants, seed mixes, and potentially small saplings was discussed, with planting methods to be tailored to seasonal conditions.
- Following discussion, a motion was made and seconded to authorize Kim and Olin to proceed with the grant writing process and seek necessary endorsements. The motion passed unanimously.

Site Walk Debrief

- A summary was provided of the recent walk at the Eliades Conservation Area. It was described that some areas previously dominated by autumn olive appear to be staying clear, likely due to informal mowing by a nearby resident.
- It was noted that the haying license for the field has likely expired and should be renewed, though there were no concerns raised about the farmer continuing to hay the field.
- Discussion focused on an area near Smith Street that has been mowed in the past. Members discussed if this area should continue to be maintained as open meadow or allowed to revert to forest. Due to snow cover and cold conditions, it was agreed that a clearer assessment should be made once weather conditions improve and vegetation can be observed more easily.
- Members agreed that having one or two members conduct site walks and report back is sufficient and allows the committee to cover more properties overall, rather than scheduling multiple repeat walks at the same location.

Future Site Walks

- Members discussed the challenges of conducting site walks during winter months. Snow cover and frozen ground limit the ability to see vegetation and site conditions.
- It was agreed that no formal site walks will be scheduled for January. Instead, members are encouraged to visit sites informally when weather and schedules allow and report observations back to the committee. Formal site walks will resume once conditions improve, likely in early spring.

Priest Hill – Downed Tree

- Photos of a downed tree at Priest Hill were reviewed. It was determined that the tree does not block access or interfere with mowing operations. Members agreed that no action is needed and that the tree can be left to decay naturally.
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4. GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

Committee Updates

- Members reflected on recent committee turnover and noted that the progress has continued through site walks and ongoing discussion of conservation priorities. Appreciation was expressed for continued participation and effort.

Scheduling Updates

- Members agreed to tentatively plan for the next meeting on the third Wednesday of January, with final confirmation to occur via email.
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5. ADJOURN

- The meeting was adjourned at 7:36 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Andrea Rollo, Per Diem Minute Taker

Approved: March 18th, 2026