

Norfolk Conservation Commission
P.O. Box 552, Norfolk CT 06058



Regular Monthly Meeting
Monday, March 9, 2026 | 6:00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT: Susannah Wood, Chair; Libby Borden; John Anderson; Bill Ticineto; Becky Eaton

ABSENT: Nash Pradhan

ALSO PRESENT (Public Presentation, 6:00 PM): Hank Gruner (presenter); members of the public

1. PUBLIC PRESENTATION – SALAMANDER AND REPTILE PROTECTION STRATEGIES IN NORFOLK

The meeting convened at 6:00 PM with a public presentation by Hank Gruner on protection strategies for salamanders and reptiles in Norfolk. The presentation was open to and attended by community members as well as Commission members.

2. CALL TO ORDER – BUSINESS MEETING

Following the public presentation, Chair Susannah Wood called the business portion of the meeting to order at 7:30 PM. No members of the public were present for the business meeting. The Chair noted that in the future the Commission should avoid combining a public presentation and a business meeting in the same evening, as it makes for a long session.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

4. CORRESPONDENCE AND BUDGET UPDATE

The Chair reported no correspondence to share. The current budget, prepared with assistance from Libby Borden, was distributed to all members prior to the meeting. The Chair noted the Commission has a healthy remaining balance for the year.

5. INVASIVE SPECIES CONTROL

a. Stiltgrass – Roadside Treatment and Private Property Outreach

Becky Eaton reported no significantly new developments on Japanese stiltgrass since the last meeting. Todd Mervash will be contacted in May and will visit to assess affected areas before any treatment decisions are made. Letters will be sent to abutting private property owners to gauge interest in coordinated treatment.

The Chair reported reaching out to Vicki McLean regarding stiltgrass on the Fox property off Lovers Lane. McLean was not fully aware of the extent of the problem; the Chair sent a map of the area, and mentioned the option of treatment with agricultural vinegar. McLean will be in town in May for a fuller conversation.

Action Item: Chair to follow up with Vicki McLean and advise her that Todd Mervosh is available to coordinate treatment of both town and private property in a single visit, which should reduce cost.

b. Botelle School – Honeysuckle Removal and Wild Rose Planting

The next step at Botelle is for Henry (DPW) to arrange removal of invasive honeysuckle along the playground. This must be done during spring break when children are not present. Nash will facilitate a donation of wild rose plants from a client to be installed in the cleared area.

c. DPW Coordination – Best Management Practices

Becky Eaton reported on a preliminary meeting she and the Chair held with Henry (DPW Director). Henry is enthusiastic about establishing a regular process — quarterly or as needed — for the Conservation Commission, Inland Wetlands, and P&Z to review upcoming road crew projects together and ensure best management practices are followed. A group meeting with Henry, Troy (road crew supervisor), Hartley (Wetlands), and the Conservation Commission is planned for April, after the snow season concludes.

The meeting also discussed a training session for road crew staff on invasive plant identification and management, which may be introduced at the April meeting. Separately, Becky Eaton has organized an invasive species workshop for road supervisors through the Council of Governments, scheduled for June. The workshop will be led by Tom Zetterstrom and will address knotweed, mugwort, and Phragmites.

The possibility of using the summer volunteer (see Section 10) to assist with roadside invasive species mapping was raised as a concrete and well-suited task.

6. NORFOLK NATURE ALLIANCE (NNA) – UPCOMING PROGRAMS

a. Native Shrub Talk – April 4

A native shrub talk by Marjorie Winters of Roaring Brook is scheduled for April 4 at the Hub. Bill Ticineto has agreed to handle publicity. Becky Eaton will request a plant list from Winters so that materials can be prepared for attendees.

b. Pollinator Landscape Talk – April 25

The Chair proposed inviting the speaker from Helia Nursery, Bridghe McCracken — who gave a well-received talk on pollinator landscaping that she and Becky Eaton attended — to present to the public on April 25, the Saturday of Earth Day weekend. The speaker's fee is \$350, above the Commission's informal \$200 guideline, but considered well worthwhile given the quality and relevance of the presentation.

A motion was made and seconded to approve an expenditure of \$350 for this presentation. The motion carried unanimously.

c. Native Plant Sale on the Green – Proposed Fall Event

The Chair proposed organizing a native plant sale on the Norfolk Green in the fall, inviting local native plant growers to participate. The idea was enthusiastically received by members.

d. Night on the Green – May

A Night on the Green is planned for May as a joint Norfolk Nature Alliance event. Both the Conservation Commission and Great Mountain Forest will concentrate their efforts on this event rather than hold a separate summer Friday Night on the Green program. A plant swap may be incorporated, as it was well received last summer. The Chair will circulate the date when confirmed. Moth Night is also coming up as another public program.

7. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The Chair reported that the Commission's application to the AKC Fund appears likely to result in a \$2,000 grant, though nothing is yet confirmed. The Chair decided not to approach the Evan Hughes Fund at this time, as the Commission's plans for Botelle are still forming and she felt it was premature to seek additional funding before those plans are more concrete.

8. RAILS TO TRAILS

John Anderson reported that the project has received permit approval, allowing it to move forward with bidding for trail construction, boardwalk installation, and a parking area. The next committee meeting is Thursday.

John noted his primary role on the committee is to advocate for appropriate vegetation management: avoiding fill materials likely to introduce invasive species, and incorporating invasive plant control along the existing rail bed into the project plan. Because most of the corridor is on state property, any herbicide use — including cut-stump treatment — must be coordinated with the state.

The parking area on land belonging to the Catholic Church's cemetery (managed by the town) is one area where the Commission has more direct influence. Plans include a wet swale and native plantings to buffer the adjacent farm field.

9. ROAD SALT TESTING

The Chair will contact Bill Ticineto to schedule a time in March to review and prepare testing equipment before the spring testing season begins.

10. SUMMER VOLUNTEER

The Chair reported reaching out to the Land Trust (Shelly) regarding the volunteer, Sophia Nathanson. Libby Borden confirmed that the Land Trust had not responded as

positively to Sophia's inquiry and has no specific tasks identified for her, but would welcome her help if there is capacity.

The Chair has submitted an inquiry to Town Hall (Barbara Gomez) regarding the town's insurance coverage for volunteers and is awaiting a response.

Members agreed the Commission needs to define a clear, specific scope of work before engaging Sophia. Roadside invasive species mapping was identified as a concrete, appropriate, and useful task for a student with a biology background. Members agreed a small working group should meet outside the regular meeting to plan this.

Action Item: Chair to follow up with Sophia, await insurance response from Barbara Gomez, and convene a small group to define the scope of volunteer work.

11. MINUTES MANAGEMENT

The Chair raised the question of how to make minute-taking less burdensome. She noted that the legal requirement is primarily to record attendance and votes, and discussed with Stacey Sefcik a possible approach in which each Commission member with ongoing responsibilities submits a brief written summary before each meeting, which can be attached to or incorporated into the minutes.

Libby Borden noted that the EDC uses an AI transcription tool and that lightly editing the AI output has worked well for producing their minutes.

John Anderson suggested that good minutes should include enough context to allow the Commission to pick up any unresolved discussion at the next meeting, even if brief. He recommended that detailed subcommittee reports be attached to the minutes rather than summarized by the Secretary, which would reduce that burden considerably. He also noted that a tighter agenda — with items removed if nothing has happened — helps keep minutes manageable.

The Chair noted that AI transcription tools have so far required significant editing for accuracy, but she intends to experiment further with Otter.ai. She confirmed that Inland Wetlands is also trialing the same tool. As a next step, the Chair proposed that members bring a brief written summary of their activities to the next meeting, to test whether that approach simplifies the process.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chair adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Recording Secretary

Date: _____