

NORFOLK CONSERVATION COMMISSION

P.O. Box 552 Norfolk CT 06058

conservationcommission@norfolkct.org
In Person at the Hub

Special Meeting — Draft Minutes

July 13, 2026



1. Call to Order

The Chair called the Special Meeting of the Norfolk Conservation Commission to order at 6:02 PM. The following members were noted present:

- Susannah Wood, Chair
- Bill Ticineto
- Libby Borden
- Becky Eaton
- Sophia Nathanson, summer volunteer

Absent: John Anderson, Nash Pradhan

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed and approved unanimously.

3. Correspondence

- The Norfolk Land Trust requested that the Commission send a letter in support of a state grant application to fund purchase of the Betteridge property on Loon Meadow Road (site of recent logging activity). Libby reported that NLT will need to monitor conditions on the property.
- **Motion:** Becky moved that the commission send a letter supporting the Land Trust's grant application for the Betteridge property. Seconded by Bill Ticineto. Passed unanimously.
- The Chair reported she is following up with the Town to confirm which checking account is receiving the Commission's AKC grant funds, to ensure proceeds are properly earmarked (e.g., toward Botelle School plantings). No action needed at this time; the Chair will report back.

4. Budget and Expenses

- The Commission has not yet spent significantly against this year's budget.
- The current year's budget total has not yet been confirmed.
- **Action Item:** Chair will confirm that a dedicated budget line for invasive species control exists this year, as in prior years and will follow up with Barbara at Town Hall for the latest figures and budget-line breakdown.
- The Commission discussed establishing a pre-authorized spending threshold for invasive-control supplies (similar to the existing \$200 threshold that applies to speaker honoraria), so that Becky would not need Commission approval for every purchase made between meetings.

5. Invasive Species Control and Native Planting

Bottelle School Embankment

- Sean Mzullin mowed the full embankment as requested.

Action Item: Becky will follow up with Troy (Town crew) to apply wood chips over the remaining weeds; Becky will stake the area to guide his work. Planting is deferred until weather conditions improve.

- A recent workday drew a new volunteer, Jeff Rogers (a part-time Winchester Road resident planning to relocate to Norfolk full-time), who is knowledgeable about invasive species and worked alongside Commission volunteers cutting bittersweet and knotweed. The Commission agreed to keep him in mind as a possible future Commission member once he is in Norfolk full-time.
- Phil Lovett has separately offered to help clear bittersweet from the area near the garden.
- Sean also mowed into the wetland edge beyond the embankment, improving visibility into the marsh, and flagged a large mugwort patch along the soccer field.
- Becky has purchased approximately \$160–165 of black plastic to smother mugwort along the driveway and is considering a silage tarp for an adjacent section. Members noted uncertainty about the long-term effectiveness of tarping/smothering on mugwort and knotweed (rhizomes may persist and spread beneath tarps for years).
- Herbicide use is not permitted in this area due to proximity to the school.

Action Item: Becky will research whether an emergency exception (citing knotweed/mugwort as a threat to infrastructure) could permit an injection-based treatment method for knotweed and milestone for mugwort.

Billings Pollinator Garden

- Restoration of the garden has been well received by longtime residents; volunteers (including Christina AStrove) have been helping with watering.

Road Crew Engagement

- Tom Zetterstrom met with the town road crew, focusing on mugwort identification and treatment (framed as "taking care of your backyard").
- Henry Tirrell asked for a list of supplies needed to get the crew started, beginning with the yard at the garage.
- A larger problem area is the yard at the transfer station, which is ringed with mugwort, including in fresh gravel piles. Recommendation: have Jess treat the mugwort there, paired with a Town crew member to learn the process; use tarps on gravel and wood-chip piles to prevent seed spread; treat the wood-chip pile near the transfer station promptly to prevent further spread.

Action Item: Becky to follow up with Henry and Troy

- Mugwort was also noted growing among the solar-collector panels at the transfer station; ownership of the installation company has changed hands, and original commitments regarding site maintenance appear to have lapsed.

Action Item: The Chair will contact Henry to review solar installation and whether the new company can be asked/made to handle the invasives and do the natives reseeding which supposed to happen.

Roadside Invasive Species Mapping

- Sophia has been biking Norfolk's roads logging invasive species locations (species, GPS coordinates, and notes) using the EpiCollect5 app, in partnership with the Housatonic Valley Association (contact: Stacy Deming). Approximately 150 sites have been logged to date, including Mountain Road, Laurel Way, West Side Road, Old Goshen Road, Lovers Lane, and Loon Meadow Road.
- Commonly observed species include glossy buckthorn, barberry, honeysuckle, and bittersweet. West Side Road showed significant mugwort (the largest patch observed to date, roughly a quarter acre) and wild parsnip, which can burn bare skin when cut.
- The mapping data is intended to guide the road crew, including marking "no-mow" zones for species that spread via mower-fragmented stems (purple loosestrife, knotweed, phragmites) and areas of all-native vegetation (e.g., ferns), using color-coded stakes oriented in the direction crews mow.
- Two limitations were noted: (1) logging is generally limited to about 10 feet from the road to edge of town right-of-way, so larger stands further back are harder to address without landowner cooperation; and (2) as a one-person effort, lower-priority species (e.g., ragged robin, burdock) are not currently being logged.

- Discussion of next steps for Westside Road, where invasive stands span multiple private parcels: possible approaches include a letter to affected landowners and a map identifying properties involved. Members discussed the general process and jurisdiction for treating invasives along town rights-of-way versus private property, and noted that some affected roads are state roads.

Japanese Stiltgrass

- Consultant Todd Mervosh treated a stiltgrass stand at the top of Bald Mountain using agricultural vinegar, as a demonstration and consultation (fee approved retroactively — see Financial Motions).
- Stiltgrass is also spreading along Bald Mountain / Ashpotag (previously confined to one area, now spreading along the whole road, likely introduced via forestry equipment) and remains an ongoing issue on Lovers Lane despite several years of treatment.
- The Commission agreed Japanese stiltgrass should be treated as a front-burner roadside priority alongside knotweed and mugwort, given its impact on native seedling establishment and estimated reduction of insect life by roughly 70%.
- Stiltgrass is an annual and is most effectively treated in August, which allows the Commission to focus on other invasives earlier in the season. In wooded areas, it is currently managed by volunteer hand-pulling.
- The Commission agreed that, before further roadside work is undertaken, a written and prioritized plan should be developed — incorporating the EpiCollect mapping data, associated costs, responsible parties, and a one- and two-year outlook.

Outreach, Signage, and Education

- The Commission agreed to install educational signage at high-traffic locations (e.g., near the playground at Botelle School and at City Meadow near the post office) identifying invasive-removal work, using concise messaging, a QR code, and Commission branding.

Action Item: Bill agreed to work with Becky on sign design/content and on sourcing a durable, inexpensive sign vendor.

- Signage will also be added near work-area stakes/tape to reassure the public about ongoing invasive-removal work (a resident had expressed concern that stakes might be harming local wildlife).
- The Commission discussed a possible recognition campaign encouraging residents who remove invasives to display a small sign on their property, potentially tied to a themed "invasive species month" (e.g., September).
- A possible fall event/field session (informally described as a "mugwort misery, bittersweet blues" workshop) was discussed to engage residents further, building on positive feedback from the Lovers Lane workday a couple of years ago.
- An updated article for Norfolk Now is planned to explain the purpose of stake/tape markers and ongoing mugwort and stiltgrass work.

Action Item: Susannah to contact the editor of the next issue

- The Commission discussed prioritizing a highly visible bittersweet-removal project near the post office and bank downtown, given heavy bittersweet growth in that area;

Action Item: Susannah will speak with representatives of both to coordinate. A Mountain Road roadside project was also discussed as a good future visible project but was deferred to next year due to lower current traffic and capacity constraints.

Guardrail Herbicide Spraying (Town Request)

- Troy has asked Henry to arrange for a contractor to spray Town guardrails with herbicide to control bittersweet, similar to spraying the State is currently doing along signs and guardrails; this would take place next year, not this season. Troy has requested a joint meeting with Henry, the Conservation Commission, and the Inland Wetlands Commission before proceeding. The Commission will review guardrail locations using the mapping data in advance of that meeting and also look at what chemical will be used.

Rails-to-Trails Parking Lot

- A significant, emerging mugwort patch was noted at the Rails-to-Trails parking lot. The Commission agreed this falls under the Rails-to-Trails committee's responsibility and will not take on the project directly at this time, given capacity constraints.

6. Financial Motions

Motion: By Susannah to pay Todd Mervosh \$250 for his Japanese stiltgrass consultation and treatment services. Seconded by Libby. Passed unanimously.

Motion: By Libby to approve \$250 for miscellaneous invasive-removal supplies. Seconded by Susannah, passed unanimously.

Motion: By Susannah to pay the Commission's share (approximately \$100+) of an invoice from Nash for plants, mulch, and weed-barrier paper used in the Town Hall planting project (cost shared among the members of the Norfolk Nature Alliance) Seconded by Bill. Passed unanimously.

7. Other Business

- New member recruitment: a previously discussed candidate is no longer available due to work commitments. The Chair will continue to pursue another prospective candidate (Avice Meehan) and will keep new volunteer Jeff Rogers in mind for the future.
- Becky has been hosting a table at the Wednesday evening farmers market (Norbrook Farm) along with Joyce Hemingson of the Colebrook Conservation Commission to promote native plants and sign up interested residents.

8. Presentations and Outreach

- Win Weekend (August): Becky and Susannah will host a table on Sunday from 11 AM to 3 PM. The primary focus will be the "Go Native" campaign, featuring Bill's posters and a printed map (produced via the Housatonic Valley Association). The Commission plans to collect visitor contact information and encourage "pollinator pathway" activities with stickers to indicate native plantings and pesticide-free properties.

Motion/Approval: By Susannah to purchase a tray of 50 native plant plugs (approximately \$100) as a giveaway, plus giveaway of leftover mosquito dunks. Seconded by Libby. Passed unanimously.

Motion/Approval: By Becky to purchase a display easel (approximately \$50) for use at presentations and tabling events. Seconded by Susannah. Passed unanimously.

- Morticulture talk on track; a Winchester Conservation Commission representative (Jen Perga) is interested to co-sin co-sponsoring.

Action Item: Becky to follow up

- Native Plant of the Month campaign: ongoing and proceeding well.
- Moth Night: well attended and successful; a recap has been posted (see iNaturalist user "Rayray" for full listing of sightings).

9. NNA Activities

Town Clerk, Debby Nelson, raised concern about the current appearance of front area at Town Hall, describing it as overgrown. Members agreed the site currently looks unmaintained and discussed options, including having Sean weed-whack and mulch the area. Planting is not advisable yet, as digging work is expected in that area later in the summer. Members agreed the Commission is not directly responsible for maintaining this Town-owned property, but will raise the appearance issue with the Town and suggest low-maintenance shrub plantings (rather than perennials requiring regular weeding) once repair work is complete. It was also noted this is a matter the Norfolk Nature Alliance (NNA) may wish to weigh in on regarding the overall appearance of town property and urge hiring of a part-time parks/rec person.

10. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:06 PM.