

Received 12/16/25
8:44 AM Jodi Moore, ATC

Town of Durham Conservation Commission Special Meeting Minutes

Dec. 15, 2025

- 1) Augur called the meeting to order at 7:09 PM. Members present: Augur, Cordes, Dudko, LaFlamme, Lawlor, Meigs, Paskiewicz.
- 2) LaFlamme moved approval of agenda as presented, 2nd by Cordes, no discussion, unanimous.
- 3) Public comment: Stevan Akerley shared some budgetary figures he had FOIed.
- 4) Budget Workshop

Augur shared a computer screen, logged into Durham's ClearGov system and the Conservation budget, which shows the past three year (FY 23, FY 24 and FY 25) actuals, the current year (FY 26 budget) and a place to put in proposed next year (FY 27) budget request.

Regarding Recording Secretary, Augur reminded the Commission that while historically they'd paid a person to write up the minutes, the Coginchaug graduation requirement of service hours should continue to be a means to obtain free minute-writing services, which Secretary LaFlamme signs off on for the students. Consensus to zero that out.

Technical Services/Consultants is the budgetary area past efforts at invasive treatment, such as the pilot herbicide program, were paid from, and while the Commission is not committed to a path forward yet (e.g., goats, another herbicide contractor, other methods), it would be good for Board of Finance to know the Commission wants to pursue this in earnest again. Consensus around \$5,000 for that item.

The mowing category had a large amount in the past budgets and for example in the prior fiscal year the Commission spent money to have the Rt 17 field of

Otte and the field of Curtis Woodlands mowed (bush hogged, though some chain saw work was also required in the Curtis field). But in the current fiscal year those two fields were mowed at no cash cost, in exchange for the right to take the hay from the Howd Road parcel. Augur noted it's too soon to know concretely as responses to the RFP for Howd Road are not due until February, but there is a possibility a bid could include a similar arrangement for the future, in which case a large budgetary item wouldn't be as necessary.

Consensus developed around \$1,000, for the Tree Grove mowing exclusively. Dues/Memberships was not a category in the recent budget, but recently had spoken about CACIWC. Consensus built around putting in for that -- \$65 for one year membership. Contributing to the Middlesex Land Trust was discussed, and consensus built around \$100 Patron level contribution (and around inviting Ben Stevens to a future Commission meeting to discuss ways in which we can work together).

On the Capital Budget side consensus to bring back the \$4,000 annual addition to the Acquisition fund, and that reference should be made to the Plan of Conservation and Development related to this topic. While it will not be enough to fund any purchase, the Commission feels it important to have money at the ready for preliminary related work, such as surveying, attorney fees, etc.

Augur shared that the Finance Director noted the barn roof on Parmelee Hill was funded by ARPA (federal) money, leaving \$44,000 in the Deerfield Barn Maintenance untouched.

Augur noted the balances built up in the Howd Road and White Farm portion of the capital budget were due to past haying leases that brought in reasonable revenues, but were missed by the Public's FOI request given the time period requested versus when funds were received. He also noted those funds could help pay for the gates and hardware related to the White Farm Hay Preservation Project discussed and agreed earlier this year. He told the Commission he'll circle back with some figures related to gates for information.

- 5) Rotary mowing ("bush hogging") at White Farm – This topic from the prior meeting was picked up now that the actual spend year to date was provided to the Commission from the Finance Director. LaFlamme made a motion that not more than \$4,000 be spent rotary mowing at White Farm, north of the lane way, and west of the end of the laneway, 2nd by Cordes, unanimous. It was noted that it's hard to know how far that money will get us, but that once that amount of mowing is done the Commission can reassess at future meetings if it would like to do more.
- 6) Motion to adjourn at 8:02 by Lawlor, 2nd by Cordes, unanimous.