



Town of Sherman
Conservation Commission
Special Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 2, 2026

Members Present: William (Bill) McCann (Chair), Michele MacKinnon (Vice Chair – via ZOOM), Michael Conforti, Jill Humphreys (via ZOOM), Lauren Weber

Members Absent: None

Other Attendees: Holly Kocet (Chair, Newtown Conservation Commission), Lisa Shirk (Vice Chair, Newtown Conservation Commission)

Call to Order: Chairman B. McCann called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

M. Conforti made a motion to approve the August 12, 2026 minutes.

Seconded by: L. Weber

Vote For: All in favor

Correspondence:

B. McCann received an email from Don Lowe (First Selectman) indicating that he might have a potential new member for the commission. D. Lowe will interview the candidate first and circle back to B. McCann.

New Business:

a) Newtown Rodenticide Policy Discussion

H. Kocet rodenticides are poisoned food meant to attract and kill mice and rats. They are placed in black boxes, which are placed around buildings. First generation rodenticides prevented blood coagulation. Second generation anti-coagulant rodenticides (SGARs) were created to replace first generation ones as rats biologically adapted and built-up immunity. These rodenticides have become a secondary cause – and top the list – of death for wildlife, specifically hawks, owls, eagles, fox, possum and turtles. A rat can live up to 10 days after ingestion of a single dose. When these types of wildlife feed on poisoned rats, they also become

poisoned and a single feeding is lethal. Such rodenticides are killing the natural predators meant to control rodent populations. For example, a single red-tailed hawk can eat 1,500 mice per year while an owl can eat up to 1,000. There is no data outside the lab that rodenticides control the rat population. A Place for Hope wildlife rehab tests for evidence of these poisons in dead birds and from 2025-2026 found 27 out of 28 tested positive for the poison. In addition, there is also evidence of these rodenticides poisoning children (over 2,000 reported per year in 2024 per another research study) as well as pets.

Cities in Massachusetts, California and in British Columbia have started to pass moratoriums on the use of SGARs. They are not seeing an uptick in rat populations. In April, Newtown passed their rodenticide policy banning use on municipal property, modeling theirs after the policy in Arlington, MA. In May, Southbury followed suit. Many other towns such as Easton, Brookfield, Ridgefield, New Milford and Woodbury are in the process of passing similar policies and 50 other towns have expressed an interest in pursuing the same. Newtown's mission is to show the state legislature that there is significant interest in banning these rodenticides in the hopes that they will pass meaningful legislation. Need to educate the legislature and citizens. There is no desire to put pest control companies out of business. The goal is to get them to adopt different tools (e.g., contraception).

L. Shirk emphasized to commissioners that it is important to pass a policy for many reasons. It demonstrates that you are leading your community in making better choices that actually work. It likewise sends a message to the state that towns are serious about removing these poisons. They hope that Sherman will join Newtown and Southbury in putting a policy of this type in place.

H. Kocet recommended that the commission find out which departments are responsible for pest control. Newtown conducted a bait box survey with support from their Health Department. They also encouraged their community to write emails to the First Selectman and others to lobby for the policy.

M. Conforti asked if the policy only applies to the municipality. H. Kocet said yes because legislation prevents it from being banned on private property. The state requires restaurants in particular to have a pest control plan and most default to these bait boxes.

B. McCann recommended commissioners read the materials sent by M. MacKinnon from H. Kocet and watch the video from A Place Called Hope.

M. MacKinnon asked how fast the contraceptive works in the population. Per H. Kocet it works within 15 minutes. However, it doesn't translocate to predators that eat the mice. M. MacKinnon looked up the cost of contraceptive – the price is basically the same for businesses. B. McCann and M. MacKinnon asked H. Kocet if she could find and share more information on this option.

L. Shirk added that these poisons will also take out the whole nest of baby raptors if brought back to the nest. They are trying to empower people to ask the right questions when pest management comes to sell their product. Once the community understands the secondary poisoning effects – they are appalled.

M. MacKinnon mentioned Deer Pond Farm and said it would be helpful to gain their support given their influence. H. Kocet suggested that the commission ask them to write a letter in support. L. Weber also suggested contacting the Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy (NCLC) and Sierra Club for their reach.

The commission thanked H. Kocet and L. Shirk for their work in this critical area. Commissioners next discussed amongst themselves the importance of adopting a policy and how to best proceed in gaining acceptance. B. McCann will reach out to Debbie Corcione (Wildlife Line rehab) to explore conducting an educational forum.

B. McCann **made a motion** that we make a plan to approach our Board of Selectmen with a request that they consider creating a policy for Sherman that all municipal buildings will ban the use of the dangerous rodenticides.

Seconded by: L. Weber

Vote For: All in Favor

Commissioners believe it is important to lay out in educational materials not just what to ban but what to do instead. The initial plan is to do an awareness campaign first (e.g., socials, newsletters, newspaper), then draft a policy and then approach the Board of Selectmen. L. Weber and M. MacKinnon will collaborate on awareness. B. McCann will work on the first policy draft. B. McCann will also speak to Cathy Hagadorn at Deer Pond and NCLC. The commission will discuss specific next steps at the October meeting.

b) Bench Dedication

B. McCann will look into the cost of purchasing a plaque for the bench that will be dedicated in memoriam to former commissioner Colette Shulman. M. Conforti has already built the second bench for the pollinator garden and is waiting to install it. He suggested anchoring the leg in concrete with a rebar pole as the anchor with a cable lock. B. McCann suggested that the commission contact Parks and Recreation and Public Works to see if permission is required and to solicit additional ideas on how to secure. M. MacKinnon said the commission should take into consideration where to put both benches, (e.g., how they face; if the garden expands, etc.). B. McCann will discuss with Parks and Recreation how to obtain a permanent sign for the pollinator garden in the style of what they used for Munch Meadow. L. Weber will check with John Cody (Land Use Enforcement Officer) about compliance with Planning and Zoning codes.

c) Annual Report Update

Commissioners discussed inputs for the annual report which is due to Liz LaVia (Business Manager).

d) Other

L. Weber advised the commission should talk with D. Lowe about native plants for the new senior center now that architect is selected. Per L. Weber the newly built Holy Trinity Church ultimately opted to plant lower cost, non-natives owing to budget constraints.

L. Weber then asked commissioners if they had content input for the upcoming newsletter. There was also discussion about generating an email list from the Weed Warriors distribution list in addition to layout and how to distribute via social media, newspaper and any additional platforms that could be utilized via the town.

Old Business:

a) Weed Warrior Dates

The next Weed Warrior session will take place this Saturday 5th from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

M. MacKinnon **made a motion** to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by: M. Conforti

Vote: All in favor.

B. McCann adjourned the meeting at 8:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Christine Aruza

Next monthly meeting: Wednesday, October 7, 2026 @ 7:00 p.m., Mallory Town Hall