

Town of Winchester
CONSERVATION COMMISSION

August 5, 2025 - 5:00 PM

Town of Winchester Town Hall

338 Main Street – 2nd Floor – P. Francis Hicks Conference Room

MINUTES

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Chair Kevin Burgio calls the meeting to order at 5:03 PM. In attendance: Sally Chesney, Addie Mehl, Amanda Hill, Jen Perga, and Tom Carter. Absent: Renee Waldron.

2. Public Comment -None

3. Agenda Review - No changes; motion by Amanda, seconded by Tom. Vote: Unanimous.

4. Minutes Approval: *July 1, 2025 Minutes*

Motion to Accept: Amanda. Second: Tom. Vote: Unanimous.

5. New Business

A. Downtown Tree Removal:

Tom spoke with the Town Manager and Jim Rollins of the Department of Public Works about the removal of two large pear trees on Main St across from the DQ. Paul and Jim have recommendations from Erik Christensen regarding replanting. The board's consensus is to write a letter requesting to be part of the decision-making process for tree removal decisions and other similar issues. The commission would like future plantings to be native species. Kevin will draft the letter to the Town Manager. Sally will research alternatives to Bradford pear trees, which are listed as invasive on the State's Invasive Species List.

B. Plans for Fall Festival on September 27:

Jen will email Candace requesting a space at the FFF. Sally will get posters and materials about invasive plants from the Master Gardeners. Jen will email Audra L at Northwest Conservation District (NCD) to see if we can get copies of the 2025 Invasive Plant Booklet. Addie will try to get milkweed packets to hand out. Tom has two Conservation Commission banners; the other is located at the Friends of Main Street office. Addie says there are posters available for free on a website about invasives. Becky and Edna might have the info on this. Sally will bring tables, and Jen will email Renee about a tent.

C. Publicizing Conservation Commission Events:

Sally relayed information from the “knot-heads” (a multi-town group focused on Japanese Knotweed management and removal) about hosting speakers and getting the word out about Conservation Commission meetings and speakers. Addie noted that she believes outreach and education are crucial. She's willing to start a Facebook and Instagram page for this Commission, but would like at least one other person on the Commission to review anything she plans to post. Sally suggested other ways to advertise, including posting flyers, writing articles for local

newsletters (such as the YMCA and Senior Center), and sending ads on Friends of Main Street's weekly email. She also suggested the monthly newspapers from Goshen and Norfolk.

The committee started discussing potential speakers. Tom suggested a few people, including the two most recent speakers, or Erik Christenson, to discuss native trees and plantings. Kevin mentioned we might coordinate with other conservation commissions to sponsor an event. Jen said that Winchester Land Trust had collaborated in the past with other land trusts to host presentations. Kevin suggested inviting members of local land trusts and conservation commissions to increase inter-town cooperation and advertising. Tom suggested that we ask people what type of speaker they would like. Amanda suggested we post a questionnaire on Facebook.

Kevin asked about the local Council of Governments (COGs) and if there were ways to work more closely with them. Tom explained that the director lives in town and is an active member of the Sue Grossman Trail committee. Tom continued and said the COGs director is focusing on building a sense of community as well as economic development. Jen mentioned that FRWA has a website page where local conservation groups can post events. Addie inquired about the Northwest Conservation District, and Sally explained that one major activity of the Northwest Conservation District is hosting the annual plant sale. Tom mentioned "Meet Your Greens", a gathering of conservationists every other month. Jen added that NCLC is planning a "Meet Your Greens" at Norbrook on August 27th from 5:00 to 7:00. Kevin mentioned that Conservation Commission members might want to attend a one-day conference in November called CACIWC. Finally, Kevin suggested that one member might coordinate the Conservation Commission calendar. Sally volunteered to take this on.

6. Old Business

- A. VoxBox Projects: The VoxBox program and presentations are over for 2025. Tom wasn't able to get his survey idea to the program in time. Commission members agreed to get our ideas prepared by the beginning of June to be more involved next year.
- B. Multi-town Japanese Knotweed/Invasive Plant Management: Tom described the 7/29 event for Public Works Crews and Conservation Commission members as a big success. 60 people from 12 towns attended. Tom Zetterstrom and other volunteers discussed invasives and served on a Q&A panel. The afternoon sessions demonstrated spraying and treating invasives for Public Works Crews.
- C. Purposes and Goals of the Conservation Commission: The Conservation Commission will start with a letter to the Town Manager.
- D. Sue Grossman Ad Hoc Committee: SG Commission members have met with landowners to get easements across three parcels. One landowner has reservations, but others are very excited, including owners of the former Sports Dome. The commission is still undecided between three possible routes. Sally wondered if invasive species in the Public Works area (near the potential trail extension) would be cleaned up? Tom says that Jim Rollins is committed to cleaning up the Public Works yard so that invasive seeds and plants are not spread in the future

7. Communications -

- a. Welcome new members, Sally Chesney and Addie Mehl.

8. Other Business - none

9. Adjourn

Amanda moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:57 PM, which was seconded by Tom and unanimously approved by the board.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jennifer Perga, Secretary