

These minutes were approved at the June 23, 2025 meeting.

DURHAM CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Tuesday, May 27, 2025
DURHAM POLICE STATION – CONFERENCE ROOM
7:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dwight Trueblood (Chair), Darrell Ford (Town Council Representative), Nick Lanzer, Anne Lightbody, Neil Slepian; Alternates Steve Moyer and Ben Phelps

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jacob Cragg, Richard Kelley (Planning Board Rep), John Nachilly

ALSO PRESENT: Michael Behrendt, Durham Town Planner and Land Stewardship Coordinator Veronique Ludington

I. Call to Order

Dwight called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

II. Land Acknowledgement Statement

Dwight read the Land Acknowledgement Statement as adopted by the town.

III. Roll Call and Seating of Alternates

Roll call attendance was taken. Dwight appointed Ben Phelps to vote in the absence of Jacob Cragg. Six people will be voting.

IV. Approval of Agenda

Nick moved and Anne seconded approving the agenda. The motion carried 6-0.

V. Public Comments: There were none.

VI. Land Stewardship Update

Veronique said they are working to enhance information for the public about accessing Town properties. They hired Mark West for upgrading the bridge at the

Oyster River Forest. They have organized some volunteer outings including removing invasives. They have worked on the nature trail at Jackson's Landing.

There is a funding request for four items. Dwight moved to approved and Anne seconded. The motion carried 6-0.

There is a request for \$1,500 for the Bioblitz event. Neil moted to approved and Darrell seconded. The motion carried 6-0.

Neil moved to approve and Nick seconded approving up to \$1,700 from the Patron's Trust for a bench to honor Kenny Rotner in Steven's Woods. The motion carried 6-0.

VII. Lubberland and Crommet Creek Project

Lori Sommer, the Coastal Watershed Land Conservation Manager, and John Plummer with the Southeast Land Trust presented the proposal for a 29-acre parcel owned by the Gsottschneider family. The lot is located on Durham Point Road and is undeveloped with a power line running through it. They have been talking about the land since 2018. It is an Oak-Pine forest with some Hemlock. It is informally connected with larger blocks along undeveloped parts of several house lots. They are requesting a contribution of \$50,000 from the Town for acquisition of an easement. There is no deadline but the sooner the better. The land would be open to the public.

An easement would allow for agriculture and forestry with a forest management plan. There is a boundary survey of the lot. The price has been negotiated and they are waiting for an appraisal. They will do a Phase I review for potential hazards on the lot. The commission discussed using \$50,000 from the Conservation Fund to assist in the purchase. There is about \$153,000 in the fund now. There are no other prospective purchases now that we know of. The land use change tax is the only funding source for the fund. Money comes to the fund sporadically whenever there is a land use change tax.

A public hearing is required to contribute money to an acquisition by a third party. The commission makes the decision on its own. The commission agreed to hold a public hearing at the next meeting on June 23. We will see what the public response is and the commission can make a decision afterward. Lori and John will attend the public hearing to present the proposal.

VIII. Coastal Conservation Commission Roundtable

Dwight told the commission about the roundtable. Any commission member can attend. The meetings are opportunities for commission members from different towns to talk about the various issues they are dealing with.

IX. New Hampshire Coverts Project

Michael attended the workshop a week ago. It is a three-day workshop about wildlife habitat in New Hampshire. Michael said it is a great program and encouraged members to apply. It is sponsored by UNH Cooperative Extension. He said most likely only one person would be selected from any given town. The applications will open in January. He will remind people at that time.

X. Wetland and Shoreland Overlay District – Zoning Amendment.

The commission reviewed the semi-final draft of the ordinance and made a few final changes. Dwight moved to endorse the draft and to confirm that the links in the appendix are accurate and to send it to the Planning Board. Neil seconded. The motion carried 6-0. We will coordinate with Paul Rasmussen, Planning Board chair when the board will have a chance to review the proposal. It may be in July +/- . Dwight and Neil will present the proposal.

XI. Annual Meeting and Election of Officers

The commission elected Dwight as chair and Neil as vice chair. There were no other nominations nor other members who were interested in serving.

XI. Review of Minutes – March 24, 2025 and April 28, 2025

Anne moved and Nick seconded approving the March minutes. The motion carried 5-0-1 with Dwight abstaining. Anne moved and Nick seconded approving the April minutes. The motion carried 6-0.

XIII. Other Business

The commission discussed 361 Durham Point Road. Michael said that the Town determined that the agricultural pond was exempt from the wetland ordinance, based on guidance from the Town Attorney. The exemption included the stream/drainageway coming from the pond.

Michael noted that site plan review for single-family houses is not allowed under state law. He said there is no review of erosion control or drainage except for the portion of the driveway located in the road right of way. The Town could probably write something into the Zoning Ordinance to provide for this review by the Building Official/Town Engineer but there would need to be a very specific threshold, such as lot size, building footprint size, or some combination/percentage.

XIV. Roundtable

There was no discussion.

XI. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:31 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Behrendt
Town Planner

NOTE: There is no DCAT recording of the meeting since it was held at the Durham Police Station.