

[D R A F T]

DURHAM CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Monday, March 30, 2026
DURHAM TOWN HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dwight Trueblood (Chair); Neil Slepian (Vice-Chair); Jacob Cragg, Darrell Ford (Town Council Rep); Anne Lightbody; Ben Phelps, Alternates: Steve Moyer and Julian Smith

MEMBERS ABSENT: Rob Sullivan (Planning Board) and Alternate John Nachilly

ALSO ABSENT: Town Planner Michael Behrendt and Land Stewardship Coordinator Veronique Ludington

1 **II. Call to Order**

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

3

4 **II. Land Acknowledgement Statement**

5 The Chair read the Land Acknowledgement Statement adopted by the town.

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7 **III. Roll Call and Seating of Alternates**

8 Roll call attendance was taken and no alternates were seated.

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10 **IV. Approval of Agenda**

11 Chair Dwight Trueblood proposed to remove several items, as he didn't have an opportunity to
12 send out an updated agenda. He noted Robin Vogt isn't here to present a logo, but Vice-Chair
13 Slepian said he can speak briefly on the topic. The Chair proposed removing Item VIII (561 Bay
14 Road application) since the Commission has not seen a ZBA application on this.

15

16 *Chair Trueblood MOVED to approve the agenda without Item VIII; SECONDED by Ms.*
17 *Lightbody; APPROVED unanimously by a show of hands, 6-0, Motion carried.*

18 **V. Public Comments:**

19 Alternate Member Julian Smith said he wishes to speak as a member of the public. He has done
20 this in the past at Town Council and the Planning Board. Chair Trueblood said he would like to
21 consult with Mr. Behrendt further about this; he finds it a little odd. Mr. Smith said the Town
22 Administrator had consulted with the town attorney on this in the past, who deemed it was
23 allowable. The Chair asked Mr. Smith to explain why he can't just speak as a member of the
24 Commission instead of as a member of the public. Mr. Smith said he will explain if given the

25 opportunity to speak. He also wishes to speak during the Roundtable. The Chair then invited him
26 to give his public comments.

27

28 Mr. Smith shared a picture of a sewer line crossing College Brook near his home at 3 Chesley
29 Drive. The sewer line crosses from the direction of Faculty Road to Chesley Drive. He pointed
30 out a large block of concrete and deadwood on the ground and said there's also a mess left by
31 DPW from a year or so ago. He plans to approach DPW, as well as the Conservation
32 Commission and Town Council, if necessary. He proposes to install, at his own expense, some
33 large pieces of granite on the downstream side of sewer line, large enough to block some of the
34 debris that comes down, but with spaces between them so the water level isn't affected. His
35 proposal will not impede the flow or damage the sewer line. He'd like to have a view of mossy
36 pieces of granite that look more natural. He will go to the DES, if necessary. He said one of the
37 reasons he bought this particular property was to protect College Brook. He also wants to show
38 what homeowners can do to improve their own views.

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40

41 **VI. Land Stewardship Update**

42 Vice-Chair Neil Slepian gave a brief overview of Land Stewardship Committee activities. He
43 shared April events, in cooperation with Parks and Rec:

44

- 45 • On Tuesday, April 7th at 6:00 p.m. at the Public Library, Diana Carroll will give a talk
46 about the Milne legacy. Lorus and Marjorie Milne were longtime conservationists, UNH
47 professors, and prolific authors.
- 48 • Saturday, April 18th, 8:30 to 11:30 am: Cleanup and pulling of invasives at Milne
49 Sanctuary. UNH students will staff an information table about removal of invasives once
50 the dam is removed.
- 51 • Friday, April 24th, 7:30 to 9:00 pm: Astronomy Night at Wagon Hill Farm, re-scheduled
52 from earlier date; Featuring UNH professor John Gianforte.
- 53 • Saturday, April 25th, 8:30 to 1:30: Scout workday at Doe Farm to install benches, pull
54 invasives, install signs. Volunteers are welcome.
- 55 • May 17th is Durham's first BioBlitz. It will take place at Oyster River Forest and Spruce
56 Hill Bog. BioBlitz is a citizen-science event, where volunteers can learn from experts on
57 site. The focus will be on birdwatching, vernal pools, plants, fungi, etc. Lots of activities
58 are planned for kids. They plan to do raffles and giveaways. Donations toward purchase
59 of outdoor garden prizes are appreciated.

60

61 Chair Trueblood asked if the staffed table at the Milne Sanctuary cleanup will be advertised,
62 noting there's not a lot of passing traffic. It was confirmed all activities will be publicized in
63 *Friday Updates* and Ms. Lightbody added she had seen a notice already in *Friday Updates*.

64 **VII. Concepts for a New Logo.** Presentation of concepts for a new logo for the Conservation 65 Commission and Land Stewardship Subcommittee. Presented by Robin Vogt.

66 Vice-Chair Slepian provided a brief report in the absence of Robin Vogt. He noted that Mr. Vogt
67 is a Town Council member who works in the conservation industry and is also a talented graphic

68 designer. He agreed to create a joint logo for the Conservation Commission and the Land
69 Stewardship Subcommittee at no cost. Mr. Vogt was scheduled to present four or five options
70 tonight, but due to technical issues he was unable to do so. He should be able to present at the
71 April meeting.

72 The Vice-Chair said the logo could be used for stickers, BioBlitz hats, and other merchandise.
73 Chair Trueblood asked whether the Commission would need to vote on a design. The Vice-Chair
74 said he's unsure, but Mr. Ford suggested a consensus may suffice. Vice-Chair Slepian added that
75 the concepts will be shared at the Land Stewardship Subcommittee meeting on April 8 at 8:30
76 a.m., for those interested and available. The Chair asked him to email the concepts to members.

77 **VIII. WSOD Discussion.** Update on Subcommittee review of proposed Wetland and Shoreland
78 Overlay District.

79 Chair Trueblood reported that the Subcommittee met two weeks ago and established a process
80 for moving forward. The five members are Darrell Ford, Rob Sullivan, Neil Slepian, Dwight
81 Trueblood, and Michael Behrendt.

82 Using the graphic [chart] as a starting point, the group will identify which activities—such as
83 fertilizer, pesticide use, and buildings, etc.— they believe should be allowed in each zone and
84 will cross-reference those recommendations with existing state law. In some instances, they
85 might propose local stipulations that go beyond state law. For example, if the Shoreland Water
86 Quality Protection Act (SWQPA) permits fertilizer use within 25 feet, they will evaluate whether
87 a greater setback is appropriate.

88 The Subcommittee will develop charts for waters directly governed by SWQPA and then look at
89 other waters in town, potentially creating matrices for each type. They agreed to remain as
90 consistent as possible across all water types. The Subcommittee will meet twice this month and
91 report back at the next meeting.

92
93 **IX. Review of Minutes:** February 4, 2026

94 Mr. Smith said he submitted comments and corrections on a few sets of minutes to Mr. Behrendt
95 and he hopes they have been incorporated into the draft. The Chair said as long as corrections are
96 minor and don't affect the substance of what is discussed, there shouldn't be a problem.

97 *Mr. Cragg MOVED to accept the March 4, 2026 minutes as presented; SECONDED by Mr.*
98 *Phelps, APPROVED, 4-0-2, with Chair Trueblood abstaining because he had not seen the*
99 *minutes and Mr. Ford abstaining because he wasn't present at the meeting.*

100
101 **X. Other Business**

102 Chair Trueblood said Town Administrator Todd Selig sent an email asking each
103 Commission/Board to submit priorities over the next year. He read the email to members. The
104 Chair said he thought of two high priorities: completing the WSOD, as well as improving public
105 communication – which has already been initiated with a column in *Friday Updates*.

106 In addition, he thinks restoration activities that will need to take place as a result of the removal
107 of the dam should be a priority. Members were in agreement with the priorities shared and didn't
108 offer any other suggestions.

109

110 Chair Trueblood said he thinks the Commission should keep an eye on Mill Pond restoration,
111 even though the work will be done by a contractor. Mr. Ford said he's not sure how much the
112 Commission will need to be involved. The town is paying VHB a lot of money to oversee the
113 project and to ensure the contractor completes it to specifications. The Chair said people who
114 live on the pond may have questions and Mr. Ford said their questions can and should be
115 addressed by the contractor, the contract administrator, or DPW.

116

117 Mr. Cragg asked if it would be beneficial for the Conservation Commission to communicate to
118 the public what's occurring during dam removal and Mr. Ford agreed that would be a good idea.
119 Mr. Smith commented that it's not a restoration of Mill Pond since the Oyster River won't be
120 returned to its natural condition as last seen in the late 1500s/early 1600s. In his view, the town
121 won't be restoring Mill Pond; they're removing some of the toxic material and creating
122 manmade barriers along the water course.

123 **XI. Roundtable**

124 • Mr. Cragg said he submitted an article to the Sustainability Newsletter. He will be sending
125 new draft blurbs to members this week for *Friday Updates* and asked them to submit edits
126 and ideas for new topics. He thanked members for their input thus far.

127

128 • Mr. Phelps reported that he was accepted to the COVERTS program, which takes place in
129 May. He'll share more at the May meeting about how he expects to apply the knowledge to
130 benefit the town. Members congratulated him for being accepted.

131

132 • Following up on his earlier comments, Mr. Smith referenced the photo he distributed
133 showing the view from his backyard. He's proposing to provide granite boulder landscaping
134 that would hide an ugly block of concrete that is buttressing a sewer line. He asked if any
135 members had walked College Brook and several said yes. Mr. Smith commented the view of
136 College Brook from campus is far different. He noted former campus architect Doug Bencks
137 had drafted a plan to "sunlight" the brook under the visitor parking lot. Mr. Smith said the
138 draft WSOD, which requires a vegetated natural landscape, is problematic. He suggested the
139 Commission re-think the ordinance to *recommend* rather than *require* natural vegetation and
140 maybe even offer small tax advantages for those who leave their property natural.

141

142 Mr. Smith pointed out remaining snow piles along the south side of [Mill Plaza] parking lot
143 and said the town should have required Torrington Properties, the owners of the plaza, to
144 stockpile snow elsewhere. He noted there's ample space on the eastern end of the parking lot.
145 He believes the WSOD should protect the Brook from piles of snow, which contain sand,
146 salt, bottle caps, paper, etc. He asked if there were questions about what he's proposing to do
147 on his own property.

148 Chair Trueblood asked which area in the photo drains into the storm sewer line and Mr.
149 Smith replied it drains Faculty Road. He will get clarification and maps from Public Works.
150 He noted that significant runoff occurs during heavy rain. The Chair expressed concern about
151 unsupported pipes spanning the water, as a failure could release sewage into the brook. Mr.
152 Smith offered to place granite slabs beneath the pipes and possibly add downstream support.
153 Chair Trueblood said any solution would require engineering input. Mr. Smith said he will
154 consult with Public Works. Mr. Ford commented Mr. Smith is suggesting putting something
155 downstream from the pipe in order to improve his view. He's not suggesting putting anything
156 on top of the pipe.

157 Mr. Cragg commented that members should visit Mill Plaza to see where they [Torrington
158 Properties] are pushing the snow. It's very close to College Brook and is more aggressive
159 than what he's seen in previous years.

160
161 Mr. Smith said from the south end of the parking lot, College Brook is a mess, with dead
162 trees, etc. He thinks this invites plow drivers to push snow there. If the area were properly
163 landscaped by the town with the help of Torrington, then it would become an amenity.

164
165 Vice-Chair Slepian said in the WSOD, there's a 30-foot setback for in-town streams that
166 would prevent any snow from being pushed that close. Mr. Smith emphasized it's an
167 enforcement issue; he brought it up to the town more than 10 years ago. Chair Trueblood
168 suggested the Commission could let Town Council know they would like the issue to be
169 addressed and Mr. Smith volunteered to help write a letter.

170
171 Vice-Chair Slepian said there was a presentation to the Conservation Commission some time
172 ago from a UNH person who had a plan to "daylight" the brook. Ms. Lightbody said she
173 thinks it was Wil Wollheim who had a plan by the athletic fields. She believes it's on track to
174 proceed since a couple of monitoring wells were installed this winter.

175 • The Vice-Chair then reported on an herbicide application roundtable held last week in Town
176 Hall chambers. The meeting came about because residents of Mathes Cove Road were upset
177 that the herbicide Roundup (Glyphosate) was used to control Japanese knotweed in the town
178 right-of-way at a blind curve. Roundup has been linked to Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma, among
179 other conditions. Residents were also upset they weren't notified about it and their children
180 were outside playing after the application.

181
182 Featured speakers were Doug Cygan, an expert in herbicides from the NH Department of
183 Agriculture, and David Rousseau, a toxicology expert for the state. Mr. Slepian said three
184 residents attended the meeting to represent the neighborhood. Also in attendance were DPW
185 Director Rich Reine and the licensed applicator for the town.

186 It was an open discussion, with Mr. Rousseau giving the history of Roundup, its toxicity, and
187 state regulations regarding its use. The EPA and other organizations claim it's safe when
188 applied properly as per the label, while the World Health Organization and other health
189 organizations have labeled it as a likely carcinogen.

190 As a result of the discussion, an agreement was reached not to spray Roundup in the Mathes
191 Cove neighborhood in 2026, with a new treatment plan to be developed for 2027. Vice-Chair
192 Slepian said the state is experimenting with a wire mesh structure to contain Japanese
193 knotweed. He noted cutting it stimulates growth and there seems to be no alternative to
194 contain it without spraying. Portsmouth and Dover have claimed to control it through non-
195 toxic means, but Dover said they do use Roundup in extreme cases. They learned other towns
196 in the Piscataqua region are following state guidelines, which include the use of Roundup.

197
198 DPW agreed to have a conversation in the fall about what can be done as a pilot program on
199 Mathes Cove Road to contain knotweed.

200 The Chair noted there's a huge knotweed patch in the neighborhood on private property
201 adjacent to the road that is not being treated by the town. He believes the problem will persist
202 until this is addressed. Based on his research across multiple university websites — with
203 Penn State noted as a good source — he believes that the most effective control method is
204 cutting in June followed by Roundup treatment in August. He suspects the wire mesh
205 approach will suppress growth but won't eliminate the rhizomes. He also said plows could
206 inadvertently damage or be damaged by the wire mesh. He added that the Town
207 Administrator emphasized that with 120 miles of roads, a uniform treatment approach is
208 necessary in order to be cost-effective.

209 Mr. Smith commented that Roundup is bad, but not as bad as Agent Orange, which he
210 claimed the town used in the 1970s. He said DPW has an eye on the budget rather than the
211 environment. The Chair said catching invasive species and dealing with them early is the best
212 option.

213 XI. Adjournment

214 ***With no further business, Chair Trueblood MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:14 p.m.;***
215 ***SECONDED by Mr. Cragg, APPROVED unanimously, 6-0, Motion carried.***

216

217 Respectfully submitted,

218 Lucie Bryar, Minutes Taker

219 Town of Durham Conservation Commission