

[D R A F T]

DURHAM CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Monday, JUNE 22, 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; Rob Sullivan (Planning Board Rep)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Alternate John Nachilly and Alternate Steve Moyer

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

II. Call to Order

Chair Dwight Trueblood called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. Land Acknowledgement Statement

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

III. Roll Call, Explanation for those participating on Zoom, Vote to allow participation on Zoom, and Seating of Alternates

Roll call attendance was taken. There is no one attending on Zoom this evening.

IV. Approval of Agenda

Ms. Lightbody MOVED to approve the agenda as presented; SECONDED by Mr. Phelps, APPROVED unanimously, 7-0, Motion carried.

V. Public Comments: There were none.

VI. Land Stewardship Update. Monthly update. Veronique Ludington, Land Stewardship Coordinator.

- They are now at about 900 hours of volunteer work for the year.
- Eight volunteers replaced the bog bridge and trailhead kiosk roof at Longmarsh Preserve on June 6th. She thanked a number of Commission members and Town Councilors who took part. She wrote the final report for the Partnership Grant to get reimbursed for materials.

- Ms. Ludington met with Wendy Moreau, the new trail steward at Wagon Hill Farm, who is working with a team of about eight dog owners to help reduce dog waste. Their focus is on educating visitors. New posters were installed and she'll continue to meet monthly with Wendy to stay on top of things.

Chair Trueblood asked about the public response from dog owners and Ms. Ludington said with a few exceptions, it's been positive. They have also reinforced that dogs need to be on leash in certain situations/times. She thinks the response has been good because the volunteers are people known to the dog walking community there.

- A Discover Durham butterfly walk was held on Sunday, June 7th at the Old Reservoir on UNH property, with 14 people participating. Walks will resume in September. She's exploring a mushroom walk and possibly a bike ride to show connectivity between properties.
- She's working with Pollinator Pathways to host a program this fall on gardening for wildlife and pollinator habitat.
- Ms. Ludington is still mapping trails and amenities with GPS equipment borrowed from the town. Once complete, she'll meet with Steve Letterman to discuss how to finalize maps that will be available on the website. New maps will also be added to trail signs.
- The Kiosk Sign Sub-Group met with Brenda Rydell from Graphic Details, who has designed a wireframe [template] for trailhead signs. Once the sub-group creates a draft for Doe Farm, Ms. Ludington will present it to the Commission. The town won't be renewing its Adobe Illustrator license, which was going to be used for text input. She learned, however, that time-limited licenses are available for less. They can prepare all content and input it over a one to three-month period.
- Durham Day is August 6th from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. The Land Stewardship Sub-Committee will have two tables and a tent, including kids' crafts. She's preparing materials on habitat management for wildlife and pollinators. Commission members are encouraged to volunteer.
- Durham Farm Day is August 15th at LaRoche Farm, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Volunteers are needed for two-hour shifts.
- She and Vice-Chair Neil Slepian are working with Marty Gorham (Land Stewardship Sub-Committee) on design and exact location of a future observation platform at Spruce Hole Bog. Marty will provide a final design in order for the contractor to give an estimate. If costs stay under the original \$12K estimate, the project will be covered through donations to the Patron's Trust Fund.
- She'll be meeting in July with Kelly Boland of NRCS, which has an easement at Oyster River Forest. They'll discuss habitat management, including brush mowing some areas

70 that haven't been addressed for about seven years. She's exploring costs and funding
71 sources.

72
73 There was brief discussion about a walk on August 5th with Great Bay Changemakers.
74 Mr. Cragg said Durham Farm Day is a good opportunity to survey residents about the
75 *Friday Update* articles, as requested by the Town Administrator. It was agreed that he
76 and Ms. Ludington will create a simple survey.

77 78 **VII. Election of Officers**

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80 The Chair opened the floor to nominations.

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82 *Mr. Sullivan nominated Dwight Trueblood to continue as Chair of the Conservation*
83 *Commission; SECONDED by Mr. Phelps; APPROVED 6-0-1, with the Chair abstaining,*
84 *Motion carried.*

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86 *Mr. Sullivan nominated Neil Slepian to continue as Vice Chair; SECONDED by Dwight*
87 *Trueblood; APPROVED 6-0-1, with the Vice-Chair abstaining, Motion carried.*

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89 *Both the Chair and Vice-Chair accepted the nominations and will continue for another term.*

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91 **VIII. WSOD Discussion.** Update on subcommittee meetings about proposed Wetland and
92 Shoreland Overlay District.

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94 Chair Trueblood reported the subcommittee finished a rough draft of the shoreland matrix and at
95 the next meeting, they will discuss buffers for smaller rivers and streams. Mr. Ford noted the
96 next meeting is July 1st at 2:00 p.m.

97
98 Mr. Hadley reminded members the [ordinances] are derived from two separate state statutes:
99 RSA 482A (Fill and Dredge in Wetlands), which is a stand-alone law with dedicated
100 administrative rules. The town has specific roles and responsibilities in enforcing state wetland
101 laws.

102
103 Likewise, RSA 483B (Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act) has its own set of administrative
104 rules, which the town must follow. In his view, combining the Wetland Conservation Overlay
105 District with the Shoreland Protection Overlay District will result in a cumbersome ordinance
106 that will be difficult to draft, difficult to understand, and difficult to implement. Vice-Chair
107 Slepian asked for confirmation that Mr. Hadley is expressing his personal views and he said yes.

108 Mr. Hadley said he supports previous discussion about a "model" referenced by the Chair,
109 particularly as it pertains to communicating zoning changes to town residents. It was unclear to
110 some members which model he was referencing.

111
112 Chair Trueblood clarified that his reference to a "model" concerned the different matrices being
113 developed for shoreland, wetlands, and small rivers and streams. Once those are set, the

Commission will decide which activities would be allowed or prohibited in different buffer zones. He also reiterated the idea to create a single ordinance, with separate sections for shoreland and wetlands, where necessary. He estimates the current ordinances share 30 to 50% of the same language, including introductory information. Merging them into one ordinance would reduce redundancy and confusion. He added that he's looked at other town ordinances in the region and found most have one ordinance for shoreland and wetlands. In addition, Town Planner Michael Behrendt supports consolidation of the ordinances from an administrative perspective.

Lengthy discussion followed, focusing primarily on the separation or merging of the two ordinances; how to address state law in town ordinances; and the expected process going forward.

Mr. Hadley suggested organizing the ordinance(s) based on a property's distance from a reference line rather than whether it is classified as shoreland or wetland. In his view, this would make it easier for property owners. He also recommended using a more user-friendly format, similar to some materials published by the NH Department of Environmental Services. He added state regulations are very complicated and the town needs to make their ordinance easy to understand.

Chair Trueblood said he thinks they're headed in the right direction with the matrices. The subcommittee is looking at where state laws apply and focusing on making the new ordinance clear for residents.

Mr. Behrendt said with all due respect to Mr. Hadley, the decision to combine shoreland and wetland ordinances has been made several times and reaffirmed by the subcommittee. While the Commission could re-visit that decision if new information emerges, he recommends treating it as settled and no longer an open question, so the group can focus on creating a final draft.

Chair Trueblood asked if there was consensus from the Commission on the merging of the two ordinances and there seemed to be agreement, with Mr. Sullivan acknowledging some sections may need to be separate. The Chair explained briefly how he sees the process unfolding; using the matrices as a starting point and then drawing upon state laws to be sure they're being addressed.

Vice-Chair Slepian noted Mr. Hadley is a new member of the Conservation Commission and the subcommittee and he's bringing a new perspective as a shoreland owner, with a focus on state regulations. While Mr. Slepian's own inclination is to stay with the decision they've made [to combine the ordinances], he encouraged the Commission to keep an open mind to differing views.

Although he's retiring in November, Mr. Behrendt said he's committed to working with the subcommittee at least until they have a good draft of the ordinance. He'll need permission from the Commission to continue as an advisor to the subcommittee once he's no longer on staff. There was strong affirmation from members that they would like him to continue his work.

Chair Trueblood also reported that he and others, along with Town Administrator Todd Selig, submitted a \$22,500 PREPA [Piscataqua Region Environmental Planning Assessment] grant application for community engagement and education related to the new ordinance. If awarded, the project would start in October and include three primary components: public education; GIS mapping of existing and proposed buffer widths and facilitated public workshops to gather feedback on the proposed ordinances.

He added that engaging the Planning Board and Town Council during the process will also be critical to building understanding before their formal review. If the PREPA grant is received, Lynn Vaccaro would provide advisory support and Liz Durfee, an experienced facilitator with planning and GIS expertise, would lead the public engagement process in consultation with the town's GIS coordinator, Steve Letterman.

Vice-Chair Slepian thanked the Chair for getting the PREPA proposal done on a short timeline.

IX. Other Business

Chair Trueblood invited Mr. Behrendt to talk about a preliminary application for a three-lot subdivision.

Before Mr. Behrendt began, there was informal conversation on a number of unrelated topics. Mr. Sullivan noted that Ms. Ludington's mention of 900 volunteer hours equates to about \$25K in value to the town so far this year.

In answer to a question, Chair Trueblood recapped briefly the topics he raised with Town Council recently, including some of the controversies related to the Bay Road property and Graziano property. Regarding the latter, he asked Mr. Behrendt if there had been an update from DES and he replied no, they're still waiting to hear back about a potential violation. Ms. Lightbody said she thought the property had been deemed agricultural and was out of their purview. The Chair said since the runoff was getting into the Bay, the town has filed a potential wetland violation notice with the Department of Environmental Services.

The Chair then said Mr. Behrendt will give a brief preview of a proposal for 73 Piscataqua Road. Mr. Behrendt said there's a preliminary application before the Planning Board; there's no role for the Conservation Commission at this time. A public hearing will be held as part of the preliminary application. The applicant will most likely not need a Conditional Use permit, but the Commission is always welcome to offer any comments to the Planning Board.

He walked through a preliminary plan, showing a private road right-of-way. The proposal calls for three separate lots. An existing house is owned by Bill Goldstein and there's also a second house, which Mr. Behrendt described as a big ADU [Accessory Dwelling Unit]. There are wetlands with a 100-foot buffer, with an acceptable buildable area. The only potential Conditional Use is if the Planning Board decides the existing 12-foot driveway (which would become a private road) would need to be widened, in which case a portion of those improvements would occur in the wetland buffer.

Chair Trueblood asked for clarification on the location of structures. Mr. Behrendt explained the owner occupies the big house in the back. Buyers for the two other lots could choose to keep the structures or demolish them and build new. The Chair asked about a “poorly drained jurisdictional wetland” shown.

Mr. Sullivan shared his findings after visiting the property. He said everything on the plan is built and matured. He sees it as a subdivision of existing structures and doesn’t envision that much disturbance will occur. There will be a Planning Board site walk on June 24 at 4:00 p.m., if any members want to join.

X. Review of Minutes: April 27, 2026

Mr. Ford MOVED to accept the minutes for April 27, 2026 as presented; SECONDED by Mr. Sullivan; APPROVED, 6-0-1, with Mr. Cragg abstaining because he wasn’t in attendance. Motion carried.

XI. Roundtable. Updates from Conservation Commission members.

- Reporting from the Planning Board, Mr. Sullivan reiterated the site walk at 73 Piscataqua Road [mentioned earlier] and also noted that cutting is done at Riverwoods; stumps still to be removed. Severino is the contractor and has an excellent reputation. The cut is also done at Technology Drive. He encouraged members to visit, if they haven’t done so. Final plans for the site have not yet been determined.

Mr. Sullivan reported the Planning Board is finishing up work on architectural design regulations. An ADU amendment is also under discussion, requiring either the house or the ADU to be owner-occupied. He thinks those existing would be non-conforming, but final details are still TBD. Tree trimming of ash trees is taking place on Durham Point Road.

Mr. Phelps asked the Chair about the status of the search committee for a new Town Planner. Chair Trueblood said after discussion with others, he made the executive decision to put his own name forward because he’s worked so closely with Mr. Behrendt. He’s not sure what the role of the Conservation Commission will be in the process.

Mr. Cragg reported there are new blurbs for *Conservation Corner* in Friday Updates and an article has been submitted to the Sustainability newsletter. There will be a separate piece on a new SELT property. The Chair said updates on the removal of the dam should continue to be shared with residents in the weekly newsletter.

Vice-Chair Slepian said he and Chair Trueblood participated in a panel discussion on June 5th at the Lakes Congress in Concord. The title was, “How Municipalities Can Enforce State and Local Regulations Protective of Lakes and Adopt More Protective Standards.” While there are no lakes in Durham, he said they were invited due to their work on the WSOD. The Chair and Vice-Chair focused their presentation on the WSOD process and how to engage town residents. He reported

239 the keynote speaker talked about how to divide an audience into segments, mostly from a
240 sociological perspective. Both he and the Chair found this approach to be interesting and
241 possibly applicable to communication with town residents regarding the ordinance.
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243 Mr. Ford reported he took part in a UNH-Extension training on easement monitoring and
244 outdoor skills for conservation volunteers. It was held at Sanborn Mills Farm in Loudon. He
245 highly recommends it to anyone interested in easement monitoring.
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247 Mr. Hadley asked Mr. Behrendt about an update on vesting of landowner rights, specifically
248 pertaining to Riverview Court. Mr. Behrendt said he received an opinion from another attorney,
249 which he's not at liberty to share yet, but will do so very soon.

250 **XII. Adjournment**

251 ***With no further business, Mr. Ford MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:19 p.m.;***

252 ***SECONDED by Mr. Phelps, APPROVED unanimously, 7-0, Motion carried.***
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254 Respectfully submitted,

255 Lucie Bryar, Minutes Taker

256 Town of Durham Conservation Commission