

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

Room 315, Town Hall
45 South Main Street
Thursday March 12, 2026

MINUTES

Present: Conor Makepeace (Chair), Mike Miller, Jeff Borne, Jim Pyskaty, Eric Severson, Dianne Saunders, Jim Loughlin (member and Acting Recording Secretary), and Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner

Public: Jack Murphy

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES, Regular Meeting 2/19/2026

Dianne Saunders requested revisions prior to appointment of Loughlin as Acting Recording Secretary. It looked like Erin took notes on the revisions, and there were no objections to them. There was a motion to accept and a second. The motion carried by consensus, with one abstention (Jeff Borne).

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Outstanding task list. There was discussion concerning primarily the mapping and the updating of maps of open space (namely Fresh Meadows) and Highly Sensitive Areas. There was also discussion of generating an updated ordinance concerning these areas. There was a discussion of the task list recently propounded by Conor and Erin.

B. Trail maps information and KMZ data. There was discussion concerning mapping and KMZ mapping, namely putting these on Google Mymaps. The data is ready to be uploaded for viewing.

ACTION ITEM: Erin will forward the data to the town for distribution and uploading to the town website.

Erin indicated the RFQ for removal of the culverts has been drafted, and that we are waiting for updated maps of the culverts to be removed.

JIM LOUGHLIN MOVED, AND JIM PYSKATY SECONDED, that the bid process for retaining someone to assist in gathering the data related to location of the culverts be waived, due to time sensitivity. The Motion carried by consensus.

JEFF BORNE MOVED, AND JIM PYSKATY SECONDED, that the RFQ be modified, such that (1) mapping data of the culverts to be removed shall be provided with assistance from Jack Murphy at the direction of the Chair and the Environmental Planner; (2) permitting will be sought by the WCC at the direction of the Environmental Planner; such that (3) the bids under the RFQ shall include pricing only for removal of the culverts. The Motion carried by consensus.

C. Official Open Space Map. There was discussion of updating the official open space map.

D. Other issues. Dianne Saunders and Erin O'Hare introduced ideas for drafting a new ordinance. Dianne and Jim will meet in Jim's office next Thursday (3/19/2026) at 6:00 p.m. Erin will try to attend; others of course are invited.

Jim Loughlin also emphasized we need to better define who we are, and to develop our own regulations for enforcement of better maintenance and preservation of the Open Space and Highly Sensitive Areas. It was recommended a sub-committee be formed.

3. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT - TYLER MILL PRESERVE

A. Natural diversity database information. There was a discussion in these matters, particularly concerning the need for parcel mapping of open space in the Town, which Erin indicated shouldn't take long. She anticipates that Town Planner Kevin Pagini and she should be able to complete the parcel mapping within a few hours.

ACTION ITEM: The Agreement Letter will be signed by Erin (and Mayor) at her earliest convenience.

B. Forest reassessment, forestry plan, forestry grant opportunities. There was no discussion in these matters.

C. Other. Erin mentioned potential wetlands-related work in the Tyler Mill area. There was no discussion of other matters.

4. PUBLIC OUTREACH

A. April 23rd or April 30th (Thursdays) are available presentation dates for the Library Community Room, with Anthony Zemba as a guest presenter. Role of the Town and GATV is still TBD, although their participation is greatly desired. Pricing of the event is uncertain, as well as from where the funds would be made available.

B. Quinnipiac University Big Event (April 11th). It was proposed that on this day, Quinnipiac University students would volunteer to assist with Wallingford open space. By consensus, it was agreed no action would be taken on this matter.

5. BUDGET FY 25/26. There was a discussion that, generally, current funding will cover anticipated expenses during this budget year.

MIKE MILLER MOVED, AND JEFF BORNE SECONDED, that the WCC authorizes the Town Planner Kevin Pagini to apply for an additional ESRI license for mapping. If this is not permissible, then the WCC authorizes applying for its own ESRI license, with reimbursement made for costs incurred. The Motion carried by consensus.

There was further discussion about mowing and brush-hogging in our open spaces.

There was discussion about convening a Special Meeting, for an onsite walk Tyler Mill. It was agreed that Erin will notice a Special Meeting for Saturday 3/14/2026 at 5:00 p.m. People will meet at the Tyler Mill lot on Tyler Mill Road off Northford Road, on the south side of the bridge.

6. PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT (POCD).

Jeff Borne reported about a recent meeting by the consultant drafting the POCD. He states that, at a recent report back by the consultant, various issues concerning the Plan Of Development were presented. As to the issues of preservation and conservation, the consultant agreed maintenance of recreational areas and open space is a need. At the same time, that need is juxtaposed with a high demand for affordable housing. As to environmental findings, it was discussed that old mill sites may need remediation.

It was also agreed there is a need to preserve and maintain open space, and to look for other open space opportunities. Such opportunities include not only expanding Wallingford's inventory of open space but also connecting them.

There was discussion of organizing trail maintenance groups, having bi-annual meetings among heads of various Wallingford departments, defining and inventorying Wallingford's open space, and providing for more staff to maintain and preserve the open space. It appears we are too dependent on volunteers.

It was agreed more trail maps are necessary.

A master parks plan is being drafted.

The statewide goal for each municipality is to attain 21% open space. Jeff also discussed his experience in drafting the 1999 POCD as a guide for drafting this new POCD. Jeff suggested we are nearing the 21% threshold, but his conclusions could vary from others, depending on how open space is defined. Open space could include cemeteries, open water, schools, and golf courses. Different definitions likely would result in different percentages. Thus, defining and cataloging Wallingford's open space is important.

Whatever the gap may be, between the percentage of open space Wallingford currently holds as to the 21% goal, it would be advantageous to let potential sellers know of Wallingford's need to expand its open space.

Erin indicated that, in particular, land as open space in the watershed is important to the town.

Motion to Adjourn was made by Eric Severson and seconded by Jim Loughlin. The Motion carried by consensus and the meeting was adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

Very truly yours,

Jim Loughlin, Acting Recording Secretary