



City of Watertown  
Conservation Commission  
**Administration Building**  
149 Main St.  
Watertown, MA 02472

Maria P. Rose, Chair  
Jamie O'Connell, Vice Chair  
Leo Martin, Member  
Rachel Danford, Member  
Patrick Towler, Member  
Marilyn Salvas, Member

**MINUTES**

Meeting Date: Wednesday, March 5, 2025, 7:00 PM, Remote Meeting on Zoom

Conservation Commission Members Present: Maria Rose, Jamie O'Connell, Leo Martin, Rachel Danford, Patrick Towler, and Marilyn Salvas

Absent: N/A

Also Present: Elodia Thomas (CPC member), Howee (resident), Will Twombly (resident), Tom Brady (DPW), Sophia (resident), Vincent Piccirilli (District C Councilor), Patrick Fairbairn (resident), Jason Gerdom (resident), KT Perera (resident), Treethan (resident), Ann Cox (resident), Libby Shaw (Trees for Watertown President), and Tulsi (resident).

Staff Present: Katie Swan, Conservation Agent, and Susan Jenness, Assistant

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Rose chaired the meeting and took roll call.

**1. Informational Update:**

- New staff introduction: Tom Brady, the new Director of Public Works, was introduced to the members and those present at the meeting. Brady has a long history with working for the Town of Brookline and City of Watertown as the Tree Warden and the Conservation Administrator/Agent. Commission members welcomed him back to Watertown and look forward to working collaboratively together.

**2. Annual Whitney Hill Abutters Meeting:** Rose chaired the annual meeting and discussed activities from 2024 and proposed activities for 2025 with abutters who were present and members of the Conservation Commission.

Topics that were discussed

- Discussed the 2024 annual report on activities that were done:
  - Student Conservation Association (SCA): The proposed construction of the box steps at a steep section of the main trail was postponed in 2023 and was

- tentatively scheduled for construction the summer of 2024. In June, the tentative agreement was cancelled due to staff shortages and low student enrollment.
- Discussion of ongoing ecological monitoring of the tree plots and red-backed salamanders.
  - Prepared a Request for Proposals (RFP) for an Urban Wild Management Plan. The RFP was drafted by a Katie Swan, Maria Rose, Rachel Danford and former WCC member Patrick Fairbairn and Watertown resident Peter Del Tredici. The plan is to focus on long-term goals and develop an action plan for the park as noted in the 2023 Annual Whitney Hill Park report including invasive species management, understanding the uses of the park, trail maintenance, etc.
  - Ongoing issues in the park:
    - Yard waste being dumped by abutters
    - Hazardous trees along the trails

### Public Comments

- Katherine Tower on behalf of Peggy: Peggy was concerned that there might be potential development occurring around the perimeter of the park and that it could lead to congregating and loitering of young people. Rose clarified that the proposed management plan will not include any building/development in the park.
- Elodia Thomas: asked about the proposed RFP, Chair and vice chair discussed the RFP goals and next steps.
- Will Twombly: asked about installing a trash barrel at the entrance on Oliver and Marshall street. Brady noted that he would take a look at the end of Marshall and Oliver Street to see what DPW can do for a barrel.
- Howee: shared a concern about park trees close to his property and wondered about the process for removing potentially hazardous limbs or trees from the Park that may impact his property. Rose shared that he can call DPW or call 311 and they will address the issue, and he is allowed to trim tree limbs that overhang on his property. He also brought up that he sees dogs off leash in the park and the need for enforcement. Rose asked Swan to follow up with animal control about enforcement of off leashed dogs.
- Patrick Fairbairn: shared that he is involved with the call for art for the Edible Watertown project that the City's Public Art and Culture Committee is doing – pairing scientists with artists. Fairbairn is focusing on Whitney Hill Park and did a visitor questionnaire.
- Jason Gerdorn: asked about a map of the park and noted that the park is a cut through and shared that Eagle Scout Troops involvement (project management aspect) could be an option for implementation of the management plan. Tom Brady, former Scout Leader, chimed in and mentioned that Eagle Scout projects are not as extensive as they were decades ago. Often a design needs to be provided, as well as construction management.
- Councilor Piccirilli: From the 2013 Whitney Hill Park resolution, the park is designated as conservation land and the Commission can come up with a management plan. Conservation Commission staff can work with the City Manager to put a line item in the City budget to implement items recommended by the plan.
- Libby Shaw: Urged the Conservation Commission to include the Open Space planner in the planning process of the Urban Wild Management Plan.

### 3. Updates

#### A. Chair Announcements:

- Rose announced that the current COVID provisions under Open Meeting law are going to expire on March 31, 2025 and the Commission needs to be prepared to meet in person if they do not get renewed by the end of the month. There is a proposed Municipal Empowerment Act bill that would grant permanent measures for hybrid/remote meetings.
- The draft FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) will be available soon and the draft Floodplain Overlay District zoning amendment was submitted to City Council for first read for Planning Board approval. Schreiber and Swan are discussing a presentation for members of the Conservation Commission.
- Rose announced that after 18 years serving the Conservation Commission, she is planning not to renew her position on the Conservation Commission next term. She also plans to step down as Chair in the coming months.
- Rose is still interested in planning a get together party at her house to celebrate Patrick Fairbairn's service to the Commission very soon.

#### B. CPC Updates: O'Connell reported the following:

- Willow Park: affordable housing project – the applicants did not receive state funding in this cycle. However, they plan to try again for the next cycle.
- Walker Pond: Project timeline was extended to March of 2026, to complete the ecological study and to include the ecological findings in the community engagement planning sessions. More time is needed for all the components of the study and to obtain a solid understanding of the existing conditions.

#### C. Agent Report

- **Ongoing Site Monitoring:** Swan has been monitoring snow storage at the sites with order of conditions and parcels abutting resource areas to ensure that they are compliant with storing snow. Swan reported that she sent out a letter notifying all applicants with open order of conditions that will be granted a two-year extension under the Mass Leads Act. Martin commented that he was wondering if there was an update on the MA DEP appeal regarding Williams Parcel, which has been pending for the last 1.5 years. Swan said she had not received any updates at this time. Rose suggested she will draft an email to Swan that she can forward to MassDEP, indicating the Commission would like an update.
- **Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC) Conference:** Swan shared that the 2025 MACC conference was held over the weekend and said it was good to see Rose and Salvas there.

### 4. Acceptance of Minutes

- A. February 5, 2025, Conservation Commission minutes were approved with amendments.

**Motion:** O'Connell made a motion to accept the minutes of February 5, 2025, meeting as amended. Towler seconded the motion.

**Roll Call:** Members were polled, and all agreed with the motion made by O'Connell.

**5. Meeting Adjournment**

**Motion:** Martin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 pm. Towler seconded the motion.

**Roll Call:** All members were polled, all agreed with the motion made adjourn by Martin at 8:45 pm.