

## Shutesbury Conservation Commission

Minutes – March 12, 2026

Approved – April 7, 2026

*Virtual Meeting*

**Commissioners Present:** Bob Douglas, Scott Kahan, Beth Willson (Chair), Mare Fox

**Commissioners Absent:** None

**Other Staff Present:** Matteo Pangallo (Land Use Clerk)

**Others Present:** Erasme da Cruz, Michael Tommie McDuffie, Theresa Portante, Joe Carroll, Diane Adams, Gregg Adams

**Call to Order:** 7:02pm

This meeting is being recorded and all members are participating remotely.

### Comments from the Chair

Willson reports there was a hike with the Recreation Committee on March 7 on the trails behind Lake Wyola, with about eight to ten people attending. The next hike will be the last one for this series and will be on April 12 at 11:00am to hike the South Brook Conservation Area. Douglas will join Willson in meeting with the Recreation Committee to plan the next series of three months of hikes.

Willson presented the Footit property project to the Community Preservation Committee and the grant will be voted on at the CPC meeting on March 23.

Lucy Gould has started the NOI process for dredging at 2 Wyola Drive and she is now waiting to hear back from Natural Heritage before proceeding.

Willson reports that the Town is putting out a Spring Newsletter and seeking blurbs from committees, due next Wednesday. She asks if anyone on the Commission would be willing to write a paragraph about wetland permitting and when to contact the Conservation Commission. Kahan volunteers to write the paragraph and will send it to Pangallo for submission.

### Review and vote on minutes of February 12, 2026

Motion to approve the minutes of February 12, 2026: Douglas; second: Kahan. Vote: Kahan - aye; Douglas - aye; Willson - aye; Fox - abstain. *The motion is approved unanimously with one abstention.*

### Site Visits Update

There have been no site visits since the last meeting of the Commission.

Willson notes that there will be a site visit for 84 Lake Drive for two forthcoming Certificate of Compliance applications. Pangallo will forward to the Commission the original Orders of Conditions for both projects.

### **Land Management Update**

Kahan reports that the bid was awarded for the South Brook Conservation Trails project and the Commission is still awaiting the contract and deposit from the winning bidder. Pangallo notes it is now seven days past the notification, which was the deadline for the contract and deposit to be returned. Willson thinks the Commission should reach out to the winning bidder to make sure they understand it needed to be sent back within seven days.

### **Discussion and vote on recommendation to the Select Board of appointment of Michael Tommie McDuffie to the Conservation Commission**

Willson welcomes McDuffie who reiterates his interest in serving on the Commission. Douglas asks him what kind of animal he would be if he could be any animal. McDuffie says a moose.

Willson invites McDuffie to share any questions with her about serving on the Commission. She reviews the process and that the Select Board will vote on his application. If he is appointed, she will provide him with detailed information about

Motion to recommend to the Select Board the appointment of Michael Tommie McDuffie as a member of the Conservation Commission: Douglas; second: Kahan. Vote: Kahan - aye; Douglas - aye; Willson - aye; Fox - aye. *The motion is approved unanimously.*

### **Discussion of Forest Cutting Plan received from W. D. Cows, Inc. for the Spear-Macomber Lot, Pelham Hill Road**

Willson notes this is the smaller of the two cutting plans the Commission has received. There are no wetland or stream crossings in the Plan.

Douglas asks if there is a representative of the property owner or forester present at the meeting. There are none.

Willson reminds the Commission that the Commission's role in Forest Cutting Plans is just to comment on any areas of concern within ten days. The State, however, has the enforcement authority to regulate the Plan.

She notes that this plan includes a 50-foot filter strip, which would allow the forester to cut 50% of the trees within a 50-foot buffer zone of the stream on the property.

Douglas has no objections to the Plan.

Motion to submit no comments on the Forest Cutting Plan received from W. D. Cows, Inc. for the Spear-Macomber Lot, Pelham Hill Road: Kahan; second: Fox. Vote: Kahan - aye; Douglas - aye; Willson - aye; Fox - aye. *The motion is approved unanimously.*

### **Discussion of Forest Cutting Plan received from Department of Conservation and Recreation Division of Water Supply Protection for Lot 2061, Prescott Road**

Willson notes this Plan is more complicated and is for a property on the east of Town Farm Road and south of Prescott Road on DCR land. This cut would be for four stands with a total of approximately 55 acres. She notes there is one 32-foot wetland crossing but the project will be done during frozen soil season to minimize damage and they will use corduroy matting and a bridge for the crossing. The cut will involve two filter strip areas with varying widths.

Douglas was pleased to see the 15-foot tall wall of slash to protect the cut area from deer browse.

Willson thinks the Plan shows careful thought about methods and goals and that the Plan meets the regulations for impacts to wetlands and streams. She has no objections to it.

Motion to submit no comments on the Forest Cutting Plan received from Department of Conservation and Recreation Division of Water Supply Protection for Lot 2061, Prescott Road: Douglas; second: Fox. Vote: Kahan - aye; Douglas - aye; Willson - aye; Fox - aye. *The motion is approved unanimously.*

### **Informal discussion of New England Power Company's Central to Western Massachusetts Energy Improvement Project for the E5/F6 Transmission Line**

Willson recognizes Theresa Portante and Erasme da Cruz from BSC Group and Joe Caroll from National Grid. Portante introduces her and da Cruz as the point people for the project. Portante shares a presentation on the project, including an overview of its history, location, need, benefits, and scope. She reviews the anticipated project schedule, including what has already happened and what is planned for the remainder of the project. Permitting should be complete by 2027.

Construction is planned for 2029 through 2033 or 2035, with different sections completed at different times in that span. She reviews where the project is in the permitting process at the federal, state, and local levels and the plans for the remainder of those processes. She describes the 2.06 right-of-way miles in Shutesbury, as well as the 25 structures, #704 tap, and substation in town, and the 14 points where the project would intersect with a wetland area or waterway. She shares pictures and illustrations of the existing and new towers. She explains that trees within the 125-foot right-of-way would be removed to provide clearance for the new towers and provides details about the kind of tree removals and pruning that would happen in certain areas for equipment access. She reviews the avoidance and minimization measures the project will adopt, as well as post-construction restoration measures. The total impact area in Shutesbury would be within 32,585 square feet and tree removal of 8,712 square feet of canopy area. The Commission should expect to receive the MEPA FEIR in July 2026 and the NOI in late 2026.

Willson asks if the new poles will be on permanent pads or on the ground surface. Portante answers that some structures will be on concrete caisson foundations and some will be directly embedded. There will be gravel work areas that will be revegetated over time after construction. Willson notes that it sounds like there won't be much permanent impact from those components.

Willson asks what the lifespan of this work is and when this might need to be done again. Portante is not sure but thinks the monopoles are good for about 100 years, but they still do need maintenance and there needs to be cyclical vegetation management.

Willson asks if shrubs will be removed as well as trees. Portante answers that shrubs below the lines are typically not removed but during construction the work areas will be mowed for equipment access. In wetland areas, they can often put matting on top of vegetation instead of cutting it so it restores faster after the work.

Willson asks about notifying property owners who abut or own the right-of-way. Carroll reviews what National Grid has been doing so far to reach out to property owners and to Select Boards and how they plan to reach out to those individuals to educate owners about the project.

Douglas discloses that his daughter and Portante's daughter play in the same soccer league. He praises the presenters for the project's thoughtfulness and what he saw during the site visit. He notes that often for such large multi-town projects there is a mitigation budget and he asks that some of that funding be used in Shutesbury for mitigation purposes. Portante will bring the question to the applicant and reviews some of the ways they have partnered with groups in the past to establish mitigations.

Willson asks if the project website is the best place to get information about changes to the design plans. Portante notes that the FEIR will have a comprehensive overview of changes from

the previous version of the plan, including changes to access scope. SHE notes also that the plans submitted for each individual NOI will be more comprehensive and detailed than what is being filed for the FEIR process.

Willson thanks Portante, da Cruz, and Carroll for the information.

### **Unanticipated Business**

There is no unanticipated business.

### **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn: Douglas; second: Fox. Vote: Douglas - aye; Kahan - aye; Fox - aye; Willson - aye. *The motion is approved unanimously.*

**Adjourned:** 8:00pm

### **List of Documents Used:**

- Forest Cutting Plan received from W. D. Cows, Inc. for the Spear-Macomber Lot, Pelham Hill Road
- Forest Cutting Plan received from Department of Conservation and Recreation Division of Water Supply Protection for Lot 2061, Prescott Road
- Presentation from BSC Group on Central Western Mass Energy Improvement Project