

Exeter Conservation Commission
Nowak Room
Town Hall
10 Front Street
June 9, 2026
7:00 PM
Draft Minutes

Call to Order

1. Introduction of Members Present (by Roll Call)

Present at tonight’s meeting were: Chair Dave Short, Andrew Koff, Trevor Mattera, Keith Whitehouse, Valorie Fangor, Alternate Kyle Welch, Alternate Sean Torres, Alternate Bill Campbell (remotely) and Select Board Representative Dan Chartrand.

Staff Present: Kristen Murphy, Conservation and Sustainability Planner

Chair Short called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and the members and alternates introduced themselves. Alternate Kyle Welch was activated.

2. Public Comment

Town Manager Paul Cohen introduced himself, offered assistance, and thanked the members for volunteering.

Action Items

1. Wetland Conditional Use Permit application from Public Service Co. of NH d/b/a Eversource Energy for structure replacement along the existing A126 11SkV Transmission Line (*Sherrie Trefry, VHB*)

Chair Short read the public hearing notice.

Sherrie Trefry of VHB presented the application for a wetland conditional use permit to replace existing wooden structures, with steel, in the right of way, in two locations which she described as near Route 101 and between Route 101 and 27 Epping Road, off Watson Road. She noted the wetlands were delineated in 2025 and a vernal pool study was done this spring. She described four existing wooden pole structures to be replaced with three weathered steel poles. She discussed working with NH DOT to gain access to move 199 out of the ROW and 198 out of the buffer.

Ms. Trefry described the upland gravel work pads which are larger for the new structure, 100’x100’ timber matting and erosion controls. She further discussed access off Watson Road, the parking lot and existing trail system. She detailed 175 and 173 with an upland gravel work pad and timber matting,

44 noting very poorly drained wetland buffers and vernal pool. She showed the prime wetland area, Little
45 River and Bloody Brook. She noted there will be temper buffer impacts.

46

47 Ms. Trefry stated that Alteration of Terrain was filed with NH DES and Statutory Permit by Notification.
48 Recommendations were received concerning time of year to do work to protect threatened and
49 endangered snakes and turtles. A qualified wildlife biologist will oversee mat placement, and work will
50 be done in the inactive season between October and April. There will be weekly monitoring, and
51 contractors will be trained on those species. Mr. Campbell asked if they could get updates. She
52 discussed wetland functions and values, groundwater recharge, discharge, nutrient removal and
53 retention. Stream flow would pass under the matting.

54

55 Ms. Trefry noted that after construction gravel pads would be reduced to 30'x60' and the area will be
56 loamed. She described the top dressing of the gravel so as not to appeal to nesting turtles, restoration
57 to a trail rather than an access road. Boulders will be replaced.

58

59 Ms. Fangor asked the permanent wetland impact, and Ms. Trefry indicated 20 SF of permanent impact
60 and the rest being temporary and restored.

61

62 Mr. Koff asked about replacement of other wood structures in the Exeter ROW area and Jake V. stated
63 that 177 is still wood and he didn't have that information today but expects structures to be replaced as
64 needed.

65

66 Mr. Welch asked about the parking lot and trail closure/use by mountain bikers. He noted there is a lot
67 of use and need of signage. Mr. Kwapiszeski stated that he will coordinate with the town as they
68 mobilize into the site, and expects trails to be closed while they are mobilizing heavy equipment. Mr.
69 Koff noted that Conservation is the group that oversees the forest and trails and recommended Ms.
70 Murphy as the best contact. Chair Short also offered to work with the lead person, Ryan Bonfield. Mr.
71 Koff noted the Commission can communicate with Fort Rock Riders. Chair Short noted there may be a
72 detour. Chair Short noted that it may encourage people to park at the Industrial Park.

73

74 Mr. Koff noted there are invasive species around the parking lot and asked if there were a management
75 plan. Jake Kwapiszeski noted that all equipment and materials will be free from dirt and vegetation to
76 minimize distribution. Mr. Whitehouse recommended the Commission cut it before it seeds.

77

78 Chair Short reviewed the criteria: permitted in the zone, no alternative design, wetland function and
79 values, minimum impact to wetland and buffer, no hazards to health, safety and welfare, restoration,
80 other permits. He noted increase of buffers elsewhere was not applicable.

81

82 There was no comment from the public.

83

84 MOTION: Chair Short motioned that after reviewing the application the Commission is in support of the
85 application as proposed. Mr. Mattera seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the
86 motion passed unanimously.

87

88 2. Conceptual project review for Dade Auto Holdings Realty Trust at Tax Map/Lot 51-1, 3-4, 3-3 for the
89 construction of a commercial auto dealership and an associated retaining wall. Applicant has received a
90 major impact wetland permit for the project (Permit #2024-02144) (*Cory Belden, Altus Eng.*)

91

92 Chair Short read the public hearing notice.

93

94 Cory Belden of Altus Engineering presented the conceptual phase 1 plan for expanding the storage area
95 of the Volvo Dealership and discussed the potential revetement slope or retaining wall as a non-binding
96 discussion. Cindy Balcius from Stoney Ridge Environmental noted the permits on Feb. 5 and 19 with the
97 state and Army Corp as well as a 1.6-acre deed restriction.

98

99 Mr. Belden noted stormwater management would be part of the phase as well as pavement and the
100 sloped wall on the back side. He described the location of the parcel on Portsmouth Avenue near
101 McDonalds with Hannaford across the street.

102

103 Ms. Fangor asked the permanent impact and he noted 28,000 SF. Mr. Belden showed the 300'
104 shoreland buffer and noted they were staying out of it.

105

106 Ms. Fangor voiced concerns about the massiveness of the project and amount of fill and noted she was
107 still not in favor. Mr. Koff agreed and noted the only new thing is this phased approach to do the
108 building in the second phase. There were many conceptual reviews and now they are coming back with
109 two more applications. If Phase 1 was approved Mr. Koff noted he did not see why Phase 2 would not
110 be because the wetland would already be filled.

111

112 Mr. Welch asked about the question of having a retaining wall. Mr. Belden noted the lowering of the
113 back part of the site by 5.' Right now they are concerned with vehicle storage, and the wetland has
114 already been permitted by NH DES.

115

116 Chair Short opened comments to the public at 7:53 PM.

117

118 Ms. Fangor asked about in lieu fee contribution and Ms. Balcius indicated it goes to the State of NH and
119 is not paid yet. Mr. Mattera noted the change from community projects to paying the state but having
120 the ability to propose projects.

121

122 Ms. Fangor noted she was surprised the state approved this. The Commission has a lot of concerns. Mr.
123 Belden noted RSA 42-A has been met as well as Army Corp.

124

125 Chair Short stated he needs to see the full plan. Mr. Campbell stated they are just left with a parking lot
126 if phase 2 is not approved.

127

128 Ms. Murphy asked about the parking lot and Mr. Belden noted they are considering porous pavement
129 however it is not easy to maintain and not recommended for use by heavy equipment.

130

131 Mr. Whitehouse asked the cubic volume of fill in yards for phase 1 and Mr. Belden did not have that
132 information. Mr. Whitehouse asked where the fill would come from and Mr. Belden indicated Severino
133 Construction.

134
135 Mr. Chartrand stated for the record that he was disappointed by the lack of respect shown for the
136 Commission and the strategic maneuvering around it.

137
138 3. Wetland Conditional Use Permit application and Minimum Impact Wetland Permit application to
139 construct a driveway and associated culvert for a proposed single-family home on an existing lot at 18
140 Oaklands Road Map/Lot 11-3. Applicant also is requesting an amendment to the designated Prime
141 Wetland Boundary (*Sergio Bonilla, Mision Wetland & Christian Smith, Beals Assoc.*)

142
143 Chair Short read the public hearing notice.

144
145 Sergio Bonilla of Mission Wetlands and Christian Smith of Beals Assoc. presented the application to
146 amend the designated prime wetland boundary. Mr. Bonilla thanked the Commission members who
147 attended the site walk. He noted the owners purchased the property in 2024. He described some of the
148 vegetation shown on the site walk and the forested wetlands.

149
150 Ms. Murphy described the aerial determination made by the state and the use of three criteria on the
151 ground. She noted if they wanted a third party to weigh in to give reasons like some of the conditions
152 they saw, not just because.

153
154 Mr. Smith showed the upland area where the house would go.

155
156 Mr. Torres asked about total impact. Mr. Smith noted 546 to buffer and temporary impacts for erosion
157 control. He described enhancement of existing buffer outside of impact areas later in the wetland CUP
158 application. Ms. Fangor noted it would be nice to see conservation of the prime wetland. Ms. Murphy
159 noted there were a number of ways they could do that. The owners are concerned with hunting and
160 privacy as well as keeping 11 acres in current use. Ms. Murphy explained that hunting is permitted by
161 right unless there is the required posting of signs. Mr. Torres noted discharge of firearms are not
162 permitted within 300' of a building.

163
164 Mr. Koff noted there was no landscape plan and impact usually grows over time. Mr. Smith
165 recommended a limit of clearing and placards. Mr. Torres noted they could make equal exchanges
166 without much trouble.

167
168 Ms. Murphy asked public comment be kept to the topic being discussed, the wetland boundary.

169
170 Jennifer Dunphy of 20 Oaklands road had concerns with the drought and amount of fill. She has
171 concerns water will affect her property. Mr. Koff noted they will talk more about the driveway. He
172 explained that the wetland scientist looks at soils and vegetation, not just where there is water. Mr.
173 Bonilla described the hydric soils and hydrology, vegetation and wetland plants.

174

175 MOTION: Chair Short motioned that after reviewing the field-based wetland mapping and designated
176 prime wetland modification presented with this application, are supportive of amending the prime
177 wetland boundary to existing field conditions. Mr. Koff seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were
178 in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

179

180 Mr. Smith presented the application for wetland conditional use permit. He indicated 546 SF of impact
181 to the wetland, 615 SF for the crossing, a 15' culvert. He is looking for recommendation to the Planning
182 Board and state. He noted Nicols Environmental designed the septic system.

183

184 Chair Short asked about limit of clearing. Mr. Smith noted he could delineate that tomorrow and send
185 to Ms. Murphy. They are appearing before the Planning Board in two weeks.

186

187 Liam Newman noted an abutter sent a letter of support.

188

189 Chair Short reviewed the criteria: permitted in zone – yes, no alternative design. Mr. Koff agreed this
190 made an effort to minimize impact; wetland scientist impacts were included in the package, design
191 minimization. Mr. Mattera noted the augmentations, plantings, nesting boxes; not create a hazard to
192 health, safety and welfare; and potential to increase buffers elsewhere on site.

193

194 Mr. Bonilla noted no disruption to hydrology. He described for the restoration criteria: 8,500 SF being
195 replaced with 30,000 SF providing eight nesting boxes, boulder piles and high-quality plantings. He
196 noted permits with other agencies.

197

198 Ms. Fangor asked about including the deed restriction, limit of clearing and wetland placards potentially.
199 Mr. Koff noted the placards didn't provide much value.

200

201 Mr. Torres asked to hear more about the equal exchange principal. Mr. Belden noted 20 plantings, four
202 boulder piles and eight nesting boxes.

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204 Mr. Chartrand asked the commitment to maintaining the culvert so water doesn't build up on one side.

205

206 MOTION: Mr. Koff motioned that after reviewing the criteria for the wetland use permit application, the
207 Commission is in support of the application with the following conditions:

208

209 1. Applicant to place a deed restriction on the back wetland portion of the prime wetland area to
210 prevent additional development;

211

212 2. Applicant to provide the Planning Board with a limit of clearing plan that shows all potential lawn and
213 garden areas and other cleared portions that the future homeowner wants to develop, to be located
214 outside of the wetland buffers; and

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216 3. Applicant to provide a maintenance plan for the culvert.

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218 Mr. Mattera seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

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MOTION: Chair Short motioned that the Commission send a memo to the state indicating they have reviewed this application and have no objection to the application as proposed. Mr. Mattera seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

4. Committee Reports

a. Property Management

i. Raynes Farm

Ms. Murphy reported that Steve Bedard has wrapped up work and she is submitting the final report to L-Chip. Volunteer time tracked is substantial and she will provide details at the next meeting. She noted it was a momentous achievement to get the barn open to the public.

b. Outreach Events

i. Art in the Barn Event (9/26) and Artists' Registration Deadline (6/30)

Ms. Murphy noted the Art in the Barn event with a deadline for registration on June 30th.

ii. Raynes Barn Open House Celebration Planning (July 18)

Ms. Murphy recommended putting something together for the 18th or 19th with a couple of speakers, kid's activities and food. Mr. Whitehouse recommended a barbeque and noted he got photos and video to ExeterTV. He recommended appealing to local merchants. The Commission discussed parking and mowing.

Ms. Murphy noted capacity in the barn is limited by the fire department to 50 people in the main floor and 25 below. Sprinklers would need to be discussed to change that. She noted the Stewardship Committee has management plans for uses and includes a use permit approved first by them, then the Commission. They have no chair now. Use must include an educational component.

Mr. Welch recommended a concert and bring your own food picnic. He noted the Recreation Dept. has grills but would need someone to set up. Mr. Campbell recommended reaching out to Ben Anderson.

c. Other Committee Reports (River Study, Sustainability, Energy, Tree, CC Roundtable)

5. Approval of Minutes

a. May 12, 2026

263 MOTION: Chair Short motioned to approve the May 12, 2026 meeting minutes. Mr. Mattera
264 seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.
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266 6. Members

267
268 Ms. Murphy noted that Mr. Campion stepped down and asked about appointing the next willing senior
269 alternate, who is Michelle Crepeau.
270

271 MOTION: Chair Short motioned to recommend to the Select Board that alternate Michelle Crepeau be
272 appointed as a regular voting member. Mr. Welch seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in
273 favor, the motion passed unanimously.
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275 7. Trails

276
277 Mr. Torres and Mr. Welch noted the new trail, *Middle Earth*, located between BLT and 50/50. Chair
278 Short noted they are tracking time and materials. Mr. Chartrand expressed his gratitude for the many
279 volunteers.
280

281 8. Adjournment/ Next Meeting: 7/14/26, Submission Deadline: 7/2/26

282
283 ***Chair Short motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 PM. Mr. Welch seconded the motion. A vote***
284 ***was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.***
285

286 Respectfully submitted,

287 Daniel Hoijer, Recording Secretary

288 Via Exeter TV

289 Webinar ID: 891 9448 7707