

Hampton Conservation Commission

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, November 19, 2025

Town Hall Meeting Room

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 by Chair Mark Samios. Members present: Marsha Kilpatrick, Kevin Grindle and Marc Cardwell. Absent: Bruce Spaman, Penny Newbury, Ev Hyde.

Audience: First Selectman Allan Cahill.

Seating of Alternates: Kevin for Ev and Marc for Penny.

Additions to the Agenda: None

Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting, October 15, 2025. Marcia raised a concern that the text of the Minutes wrt to the Walktober Event and the obstacle posed by heavy brush did a disservice to the hard work of the Timmerman family to clear the dam site for public access. Marcia explained that most people were able to access the site but that Nick Bellatoni could not because of his recent knee surgery, not because of any brush. A motion to approve the minutes with this addendum (Kevin/Marc). Approved.

Bird Houses

Marcia reported that she obtained an agreement from the Cub Scout leader Rich Telford to construct some birdhouses for the LRP. The number of bird houses will depend upon the availability of materials and and there is no specific timeline.

Marcia brought up the subject of wood duck houses. A discussion followed about the design of a wood duck house and how best to support it above the ground. Marcia commented that she would be willing to pay for this project herself and make it a donation to the Little River Preserve. There was universal support for her initiative.

Little River Preserve

Kevin updated the Commission on the status of the LRP project. The Commission was aware there was a species of concern in the LRP and, finally, we have learned that the species in question is the wood turtle. Unfortunately, the entire LRP provides habitat and nesting opportunities for the wood turtle. Fortunately, the fact that the land has been hayed for many years means that the LRP is not viewed as pristine habitat but rather as habitat that has already been somewhat degraded. That will make the bar somewhat lower for the LRP to win DEEP approval.

Before DEEP will grant us approval to proceed with our construction work DEEP is requiring the town to contract with a qualified herpetologist to determine how best to protect the wood turtle population. Kevin has spoken with the herpetologist (Quinn Ecological out of Plainfield). The initial conversation went well and we learned there was some confusion at DEEP about the mowed trail around the property. DEEP did not understand that it was just a mowed path in the grass; they thought we were planning to turn it into a hard surface trail.

Kevin's view is that the best-case scenario is a three-month delay in putting out the request for Proposals. The worst case is that DEEP required a telemetry study of wood turtles on the property to confirm their nesting and hunting behaviors.

One possible solution will be to declare the lower field (the wet field closest to the river and below the access road into the property) a "wood turtle preserve" and remove it from the land available to be hayed. If this option is accepted by the DEEP it will be necessary to change the terms of the haying contract.

Grant Report

The Chair noted that Penny had done a tremendous amount of work to prepare the required reporting for DEEP. He noted that the process of preparing it had led to improvements in accountability and financial controls.

New Business

DEEP Grants

A new round of state money will soon become available. There was general agreement we do not have the bandwidth to pursue it at this time. This led to a discussion of the need to update a list of properties we might want to purchase in the future. Everyone agreed we should start be reviewing the last list of target properties prepared several years ago.

Abandoned Roads

The Chair asked if it was really practical to turn one or more abandoned roads into hiking trails? He added that he estimated that each road would require at least \$6,00 for gates, signage and a kiosk. Is that a good investment of our time and resources?

December Meeting Canceled

A suggestion was made to cancel the December 2025 meeting. Motion made (Marc/Kevin). Approved.

Adjourned

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20