

Norwich Conservation Commission
April 21, 2026, Meeting Notes DRAFT

Attending: Chris Rimmer, Peg Merrens, Lynnwood Andrews, Alex Gottlieb, Craig Layne, Lindsay Putnam

Agenda Items:

Outreach

Lynnwood posted on listserv about garden cleanup: leaving old plants alone as long as possible (until at least after May) because beneficial insects are overwintering in the dead plants and leaf litter.

Lindsay changed PO spotted lanternfly display to vernal pool display.

Suggestion made to advertise No May Mow again. Emphasis on how to use our space for ecosystem benefit and not just have vast expanse of mowed lawn, ecologically barren. Rather than saying, “never mow”, gradually increase the area that isn’t mowed, promote and plant natives that bloom over the course of the season. NMM shouldn’t be a yes or no; rather, it could be not to mow all season in increasingly larger areas. Concerns of not mowing: ticks, invasives.

Ticks reference <https://vtcostudies.org/what-we-do/projects/backyard-ticks>.

Include reference on how to mitigate invasives.

Blood Brook Riparian Project

Potential project happening with Kelly Stettner, Ottaquechee Natural Resources Conservation District manager. Heritage condos site. She has asked us if we are interested in being a partner with their project: habitat restoration, native plantings, invasive species management, riparian buffer, improved meadow habitat for pollinators. We would do site visit with Kelley if condo board approves project. Commission is willing to support if it goes through. Of interest to us because of overlapping interests in supporting our local ecosystems.

Treasurer’s Report/Budget Discussion

Peg received an inquiry from the Trails Committee about the status of a gift intended for trail work that was approved last fall by the Selectboard. Peg inquired with the Town Finance Director and received an email confirmation that the gift was deposited in the General Fund and, “When the trails committee spends the donation funds, the expense can be notated as such when submitted to the Finance Office. At that time the Finance Office can decide how it wishes to show the expense. We can either over spend the trails expense line item or create an expense line item to reflect the spending of the donation.” Peg recommended that the Trails Committee line up pending trail work prior to the end of June.

Peg provided a year-to-date summary of what remains in the Conservation Commission budget for each line item based off of a summary sent to her from the Finance Director. Peg suggests that next year we might rename some of the categories, which have been used year after year, but are sometimes not very precise. Peg reminds us that Town doesn’t pay tax. If we know we

are going to buy something expensive, we can get the tax exemption form from the Town; seek that exemption in advance of paying.

Milt Frye Nature Area

Lynnwood discovered a huge pile of leaves dumped along the brook below the neighboring property. She learned that they came from a lawn contractor working for the neighbors. The contractor agreed to move the leaves off the nature area property; the neighbors said that they would be very precise with directions to their contractors in the future about the property lines.

Vernal pool is full. A lot of frogs and egg masses. No evidence of salamanders.

Native plant seedlings are coming up where Lynnwood did plantings. Plastic for killing grass in the next planting section of will be laid down soon.

Invasives: Craig will check with Redstart about coming back for more chervil management along the brook banks and in the meadow area. Craig and Lynnwood will check about chervil location and density. Redstart Forestry is also scheduled to do some buckthorn management around the edge of the meadow. (Phragmites in Ompompanoosuc will also be addressed by Redstart; it needs follow up after first treatment).

EABMS

EAB subcommittee realized that quite a few trees which were marked are actually outside the town right of way. Those trees were unmarked by the subcommittee, reducing the total. The subcommittee has also separately marked trees within the utility ROW, which will be removed by GMP. That reduces the original total of trees intended for removal in this first round from ~580 to ~390. Revised RFPs were issued to reflect this change. Seven contractors responded. Subcommittee members did site visits with each interested contractor. April 30 is the day when the Town will review bids. Town Manager indicates he will ask for EABMS committee input on which contractor is chosen. Chris Kaufman of DPW will also assist in choice of contractor. Committee will be providing info about which landowners want their wood taken away, chipped on site, or left onsite. Subcommittee members will work closely with all contractors and this is expected to entail a lot of work. After this first round of removals, the next task will be to inventory for the next stage of cutting, targeted for 2027.

Amphibian Team

Craig and Peg went out to two locations to assist amphibian road crossings in early April. New Boston and Union Village roads. Peg witnessed a lot crossing along the beaver pond section of New Boston Road. She assisted 15 wood frogs, 15 salamanders, and assisted/witnessed many peepers. Conditions were heavy rain, full darkness. Craig had two helpers who had reached out to him after the listserv post that a crossing event would be coming up. Lynnwood suggests that we do a series of posts starting late Feb, March alerting community that this will be coming up and asking for contact information if interested. Craig used equipment from Women's Club grant: headlights, buckets, vests. Craig is looking into acquiring plastic corrugated sheets to hold the road signs at the crossings. Craig found 2 leopard frogs (vernal pool at Brookmead; site along lower Turnpike near Blood Brook). This is a species which is relatively uncommon on our area and is at risk from habitat loss and pollution.

Vernal Pool walk with Upper Valley Land Trust: 30 participants (with waiting list). Kevin Tolan from Vermont Center for Ecostudies taught the group how to map the pools. Holly Henderson from Upper Valley Land Trust and Craig assisted.

The group also learned how to monitor pools, and identified wood frogs and early salamanders.

March Minutes: Amended incorrect reference to "VT Land Trust" to "Upper Valley Land Trust". Craig moved to approve as amended; Chris seconded. March minutes approved.

Meeting adjourned: 8:15 PM.