

## CONSERVATION COMMISSION

The Lancaster Conservation Commission is a seven-member appointed volunteer board, with associate members. The primary function of the Conservation Commission is to ensure local-level compliance with the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, the Lancaster Wetlands Protection Bylaw, and issue decisions relating thereto for all development projects in Lancaster.

The two types of applications most often reviewed by the Commission for development projects are Requests for Determination of Applicability (RDA) and Notices of Intent (NOI). The Commission also performs other regulatory functions per the Wetlands Protection Act and Bylaw, such as reviewing Resource Area Delineation (RAD) applications, requests for Certificates of Compliance (COC) for completed projects, and issuing Enforcement Orders for activities in violation of the Wetlands Protection Act and/or Bylaw.

2015 was a busy year for wetland filings, with the Commission approving a total of 15 NOI's and 11 RDA's, compared to 8 NOI's and 10 RDA's in 2014. During the course of 2015, the Commission reviewed the following projects:

Filing	Applicant	Location	Action	Date
NOI	Cumberland Farms	94 Main Street	Approved	01/13/15
RDA	Timothy Coughlan	2069 North Main Street	Approved	01/13/15
RDA	CSX Transportation, Inc.	Length of railroad ROW	Approved	04/14/15
RDA	John Bowen	10 Fire Road 55	Approved	05/12/15
COC	Double P Realty, Inc.	94 Main Street	Approved	05/12/15
NOI	Benjamin Lahti	Fire Road 12 (Lot 27-A)	Approved	05/26/15
COC	Blue Heron Pond, LLC	High St. Ext.(Lot 38-86F)	Approved	05/26/15
RDA	Authority Drive RT	640 Sterling Street	Approved	06/09/15
COC	Terri Tranter	25 Fire Road 12	Approved	06/09/15
NOI	Thomas Kelley	13 Mountain Laurel Lane	Approved	06/23/15
RDA	Thomas Benoit	17 Connor Lane	Approved	06/23/15
RDA	Edward Pearlman	220 Fort Pond Road	Approved	06/23/15
COC	John & Christina Quill	45 Fire Road 8	Approved	06/23/15
RDA	Leonard Fontaine	141 Nicholas Drive	Approved	07/14/15
COC	Lancaster Development Trust	88 Devonshire Way	Approved	07/14/15
COC	Keith Rockel	Ballard Hill, Main Street	Approved	07/14/15
RDA	Liberty Hill Farms	87 Bull Hill Road	Approved	07/28/15
NOI	Leverton Family Trust	Ponakin Road (Lot 24-44)	Approved	07/28/15
COC	Philbin & O'Neil, LLC	396 Hilltop Road	Approved	07/28/15
NOI (Amended)	Patrick Byrne	Seven Bridge Road (Lot 30-66E)	Approved	08/11/15
NOI	Robert Cichy	15 Old Lunenburg Road	Approved	08/25/15
RDA	Lancaster DPW	435 Center Bridge Road	Approved	08/25/15

RDA	Lancaster DPW	Packard Street (Lot 34-107)	Approved	08/25/15
COC	Gehrlicher Solar America	1999 Shirley Road	Approved	08/25/15
COC	Amber Mills	141 Old Union Turnpike	Approved	09/22/15
NOI	Gary Shepard	2061 Main Street	Approved	10/13/15
NOI	Poras & Weienerwald RT	122 & 142 Hilltop Road	Approved	10/27/15
NOI	Curtis Plante	392 & 394 Hilltop Road	Approved	10/27/15
COC	Carragher	118 Carter Street	Approved	10/27/15
NOI	Keith Kopley	339 Seven Bridge Road	Approved	11/10/15
NOI (Amended)	North Lancaster LLC	McGovern Boulevard	Approved	11/10/15
NOI	Michael Gleason	56 Main Street	Approved	11/10/15
RDA	Michael Rivard	456 Langen Road	Approved	11/10/15
NOI	Curtis Plante	392 Hilltop Road	Approved	11/24/15
NOI	Curtis Plante	394 Hilltop Road	Approved	11/24/15
NOI	John Laflamme	204 Fire Road 3	Approved	11/24/15

### **Land Protection**

Expansion of the Lancaster Town Forest has been identified as a top priority by the Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee (OSC). In 2015, the Commission and Lancaster Land Trust completed **Lancaster Town Forest Expansion Phase I**, a collaborative conservation project permanently protecting nearly 18 acres of land (comprised of five Assessor's parcels) adjacent to the Lancaster Town Forest. The Trust purchased the properties with the help of a Conservation Partnership Grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, which funded 50% of acquisition costs. The Town contributed the remaining 50% through the Commission's purchase of a Conservation Restriction from the Trust, which was previously approved by voters at the 2014 Annual Town Meeting. The newly protected land will be managed for wildlife habitat, passive recreation, and sustainable forestry. The Commission and OSC look forward to working with the Lancaster Land Trust on future land conservation projects enlarging the Town Forest and other high priority focus areas as well, such as the Cook Conservation Area.

At the 2015 Annual Town Meeting in May, voters approved the transfer of 7 acres of land (Parcel 2-3, back of Donelle Way) to the Commission's care and control. This parcel protects important wildlife habitat and the Bow Brook watershed.

In August, the Commission gratefully accepted a generous donation of 1 acre of land on Ponakin Road from the Estate of Eleanor Jarvis. This parcel protects 550 feet of environmentally important riparian frontage along the North Nashua River, and abuts 4.2 acres of existing Conservation Commission land.

### **Other Business**

Commission member Ted Manning and Associate member Tom Early departed the Commission at the expiration of their terms on June 30<sup>th</sup>. On behalf of Lancaster residents, the Commission thanks them for their years of dedicated service to the Town.

In February, the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) Interactive Qualifying Project Group (IQPG), comprised of WPI students Adam Carrier, Johnpatrick Connors, Hannah Lee, and Jeremy Soderholm, working under the direction of their faculty advisor David Spanagel, submitted a “mock” Notice of Intent (NOI) to the Commission for proposed access improvements within the Cook Conservation Area (CCA). Preliminary to filing the NOI, the IQPG worked with the Lancaster Friends of the Nashua to obtain information on the need for improvements through the administration of a survey to visitors to CCA. The results of the survey identified two bridges in very bad condition spanning narrow streams; one where the trail crosses over McGovern Brook, the other over an unnamed intermittent stream. In the IQPG’s NOI “hearing” before the Commission, the students presented their design plans for the proposed new bridges, prepared in a professional civil engineering format. The size and depth of the proposed concrete bridge footings were based on a thorough analysis of soil samples taken from the two sites, while the wood plank spans were of sufficient width, with hand rails on each side, to comply with ADA (American Disability Act) requirements. During the hearing, Commission members asked pointed questions and made a few comments and suggestions for improving both the substance and style of the IQPG’s presentation. At the hearing’s conclusion, Commissioners were unanimous in praising the IPQG students and their faculty advisor for the excellent preparation of the engineering plans and presentation of the project. The work done by the IQPG will be of invaluable assistance when trail improvements are actually pursued at CCA.

In 2015, the developer of the Eagle Ridge Estates subdivision cleared two new connector trails on the Commission’s Sugarbush parcel located within the subdivision. The newly cleared trails provide walking access to Shannon Way and George Hill Road from the parking area on Sterling Road. Additional trail clearing and improvements are planned for 2016.

### **What’s New for 2016**

Some of the Commission’s upcoming activities in 2016 will include the continued conservation of open space properties, maintaining the conservation land throughout the town to provide a rural environment for the residents to enjoy, working with potential developers in seeking permanent conservation easements for path systems, and similar ideas for a variety of other conservation-oriented projects.

Also in 2016, the Commission will be reviewing the Lancaster Wetlands Protection Bylaw and its associated regulations toward making changes to strengthen regulatory protections for wetlands, their adjacent buffer zones, and riparian areas.

The Lancaster Conservation Commission meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 7:00 PM at the Lancaster Community Center. Everyone is welcome to join the Commission for these meetings and public involvement is always encouraged.

The Community Development and Planning Office coordinates all meeting schedules and is open Monday through Thursday, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. As always, we welcome citizen’s questions, comments or suggestions. Please feel free to contact us at 978-365-3326 (David Koonce x1054 or Heather Hampson x1310), [dkoonce@lancasterma.net](mailto:dkoonce@lancasterma.net) or [hhampson@lancasterma.net](mailto:hhampson@lancasterma.net). For more information on conservation issues in Lancaster, please visit us on the town’s web site: [www.ci.lancaster.ma.us](http://www.ci.lancaster.ma.us).

Respectfully submitted,

**Ken Rapoza, *Chair***

**Nathan Stevens, *Vice-Chair***

**Peter Farmer**

**Ruth Anderson**

**Tom Christopher**

**James Lavallee**