

Report of the Conservation Commission to the Board of Selectmen 2015/2016

Norfolk's Conservation Commission consists of five regular and two alternate members appointed by the Board of Selectmen to 3-year staggered terms. Members are: Molly Ackerly, John Anderson, Vice Chair, Elizabeth Borden, Shelley Harms, Chair, Nash Pradhan, and alternate Martha Klein, Secretary. The Commission currently has one vacancy.

The Commission's duties include: (1) keeping an index of open publicly or privately owned areas, including wetlands, for the purpose of obtaining information on their proper use; (2) conducting research into the use, and possible use, of land in the municipality; (3) administering gifts made to the municipality for the commission's purposes, subject to the terms of those gifts; and (4) approving, before their submission, state grant-in-aid applications for programs related to the use of open space land for conservation or recreation purposes. It also has a number of discretionary abilities, such as: (5) making recommendations on proposed land use changes, (6) recommending plans and programs for the development and use of all open areas, (7) acquiring (with approval of the legislative body) land and easements in the name of the municipality, and (8) coordinating and working with non-government bodies for conservation purposes.

Invasive Species Initiatives

The Commission conducted its annual Ornamental Plant Exchange at the Farmers Market in June 2016, educating residents and incentivizing them to replace invasive shrubs with natives. Native shrubs for the exchange were generously donated by Pride's Farm.

The Commission continued removing invasive plants on Town properties: Ten euonymus and hundreds of Norway maple saplings were removed at Buttermilk Falls, thanks to a generous grant from the Norfolk Community Association, and purple loosestrife was pulled in the wet meadow at Botelle School.

Signs were made for the Town Hall native planting, thanks to a generous grant from the Norfolk-Colebrook Garden Club.

The Commission hosted a well-attended presentation at the Norfolk Library about landscaping without lawns.

Other activities

The Commission's Facebook page, which currently has 96 "likes," continues to inform the community about wildlife sightings, the Commission's activities, and local conservation. The Commission's section of the Town website contains resources for the community regarding conservation in Norfolk, including the natural resource inventory. Hard copies of the natural resource inventory continue to be sold at the Town Clerk's office for \$25, a price that covers its cost (\$18.45 each).

The commission's budget for 2015-16 was \$750. Most of this was spent for the invasive species removal at Buttermilk Falls. \$150 paid for the library presentation.

In the coming year, the Commission plans to continue its efforts related to controlling invasive species and educating Norfolk residents about conservation issues.

Respectfully submitted,
Shelley Harms, Chair
July 2016