



**Town of Stowe  
Conservation Commission  
Monday January 12, 2026  
MEETING MINUTES**

A regular meeting of the Conservation Commission was held on Monday January 12, 2026 at 5:30 pm. The meeting was held in person at the Stowe Town Office with remote participation via zoom. Commission members in attendance included: Catherine Gott, Philip Branton, Evan Freund, Kay Barrett, and Walter Frame. Staff Sarah McShane was also present. Guests Tom Rogers, Lyn Goldsmith, Bob Davison, Mila Lonetto, and Brett Loomis also attended.

**Call to Order**

Chair Gott called the meeting to order at approximately 5:30 PM.

**Public Comments & Adjustments to the Agenda**

None.

**Review of Meeting Minutes [10/27/2025]**

W. Frame motioned to approve the minutes as written; K. Barrett seconded. The motion passed and the minutes were approved.

**Overview of Mayo Farm Conservation Easement & Timeline**

The meeting opened with brief introductions, followed by a staff presentation providing an overview of Mayo Farm, including the Town's acquisition of the property, existing uses, the conservation easement, and the community process for determining whether the easement should be amended or terminated.

C. Gott asked about the Governor's recent executive order related to wetlands and how that might impact the property. P. Branton noted the State's upcoming responsibility to assume floodplain development review. Members discussed historical development pressures in the 1980s at the time of the Town's acquisition, environmental constraints, and community attitudes toward growth and development. W. Frame recalled that the Trapp Family Lodge burned down in the early 1980s and was later rebuilt. Staff noted that, similar to today, community conversations at the time were complex, and although the acquisition vote passed, it did so narrowly.

K. Barrett asked about the underlying deed restrictions. Staff explained that when the Town acquired the property from the land trust, the deed required the land to be used primarily for open space and agricultural purposes. Members discussed the ambiguity of the term "primarily" and how it caused confusion both historically and today. Members reviewed Town Meeting Day votes, including a failed 2001 vote related to relocating and improving the event fields. Following that vote, the Conservation Commission worked with the land trust and the Stowe community from 2001–2002, leading to an overwhelmingly approved conservation easement.

Tom Rogers distributed a land trust handout and provided an overview of the easement, explaining the land trust's role in protecting the property's conservation values. Members reviewed the easement's purpose and requirements. Staff noted that Mayo Farm is unique in that the easement has a 25-year renewal term, rather than being held in perpetuity like other conserved Town properties. T. Rogers added that term easements are no longer permitted. P. Branton asked whether the easement could be amended to be perpetual to avoid future renewal processes. Members discussed the importance of public education and why the easement was negotiated as a 25-year term. W. Frame explained that his

understanding is the term was the result of compromise to secure voter approval. Members reviewed the easement's permitted uses, zones – including the homestead zone, as well as the renewal process and the two-year period leading up to the renewal of the term. The easement calls for the Conservation Commission to lead a warned public hearing process to gauge community opinion and support. Staff explained that the first step is to assess the easement's continued relevance and community support and whether changes are desired. A secondary step would involve evaluating potential amendments and/or termination. During the first year (2026), staff suggested for the Conservation Commission to focus on listening to the community and reporting its findings to the Selectboard. The Selectboard may then act independently or in response to a petition. Members discussed concerns about the potential for multiple competing petitions. T. Rogers explained that while the land trust retains veto authority over amendments, it cannot veto a vote to terminate the easement.

The Commission emphasized the importance of public education and ensuring voters are well informed. Staff shared plans to temporarily hire Tom Jackman to support community education and increase capacity for the process. She outlined potential outreach efforts, including meetings with the Recreation Commission, Planning Commission, and Housing Task Force. Members also discussed possible videos, articles in the *Stowe Guide* and *Stowe Reporter*, and other educational materials. M. Lonetto suggested using community ambassadors to help disseminate information.

Members discussed the success of the Stowe 2050 survey and the potential use of a similar approach. Staff recommended launching the process in the first half of the year, with the second half focused on engaging users through on-site activities/events. Members discussed the process and potential amendments, including the possibility of allowing community housing and the level of support such amendments might receive from the land trust. The group emphasized the importance of understanding ongoing community conversations and the types of amendments the Stowe Land Trust would consider. The discussion concluded with identification of next steps and topics for the next meeting.

### **General Reports & Updates**

C. Gott noted that this is the annual period for considering whether to award the Conservationist of the Year. Members shared several nomination ideas and will continue the discussion at the next meeting.

**Correspondence:** None

**Next Meeting Date:** February 9, 2026

**Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned shortly after 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sarah McShane