



Town of Stowe
Conservation Commission
Monday March 23, 2026
MEETING MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Conservation Commission was held on Monday March 23, 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, Kay Barrett, and Ryan Krukar. Staff Sarah McShane was also present. Guests Paul Moody, Jack Cronin, Julie Michaels, Pauline Lambert, Alan and Karen Kovaks, also attended.

Call to Order

Chair Gott called the meeting to order at approximately 5:33 PM.

Public Comments & Adjustments to the Agenda

Chair C.Gott invited public comment on non-agenda items and any proposed adjustments or additions to the agenda. Several members of the public were in attendance. Jack Cronin introduced himself as a West Hill Road property owner. He expressed interest in assisting the Commission with its work and shared comments regarding Mayo Farm and the importance of open space. Paul Moody, also a West Hill Road resident, introduced himself and shared his perspectives. Julie Michaels introduced herself, asked about the Commission's recent meeting with the Recreation Commission, and expressed support for the project. She commented on the importance of the Parker Barn, including its preservation, improving access, and integrating it into the Quiet Path experience. Pauline Lambert, a resident of Upper Baird Road, spoke about the significance of the Parker Barn as part of the area's conserved character and as an important element of the community beyond its identity as a destination for mountain recreation. Alan and Karen Kovaks of Lower Leriche Road stated that they were attending to stay informed about activities related to Mayo Farm. Mr. Cronin also commented on the West Branch, climate change considerations, and the importance of protecting watershed areas. No adjustments to the agenda were proposed.

Review Meeting Minutes (02/09/2026)

K.Barrett motioned to approve the minutes from February 9, 2026. The motion was seconded by P.Branton. The meeting minutes were approved as written.

Mayo Farm Conservation Easement – Next Steps

Chair Gott opened the discussion on Mayo Farm. Staff explained that the goal of the meeting was to: (1) review responses from the Quick Community Input Survey; (2) identify a date and outline for a kickoff "Easement 101" event; and (3) establish a general public engagement plan for June, July, and August to allow for scheduling and coordination. Staff noted that if the Commission could reach agreement on these items, the April meetings could likely be canceled. She also advised that a proposal from the Mt. Mansfield Backcountry Ski Alliance related to Sterling Forest would need to be scheduled for Commission review for a date in the coming months.

Staff provided an overview of the approximately 250 survey responses received to date, noting the strong participation and that the feedback offers useful direction for next steps. Commissioners had been provided with the full list of comments and questions, as well as a high-level summary, and engaged in a discussion of the results. K. Barrett shared observations on the responses, noting she was surprised by the volume of comments emphasizing conservation and preservation of open space. C. Gott highlighted

the comment regarding the connection between Morristown and the Stowe Recreation Path and noted that some responses supported limited housing on a portion of the property.

Staff explained that comments had been organized into common themes and draft responses had been prepared. Members discussed whether and how to share this information publicly. K. Barrett suggested adding a response regarding the Stowe Land Trust and the relationship between a property owner and an easement holder, as well as other restrictions affecting the property. P. Branton suggested posting a summary of responses rather than the full unedited comments. S. McShane explained that the survey will remain open, and P. Branton recommended keeping it open for three months. A. Kovaks suggested re-posting the survey on Front Porch Forum and in the Stowe Reporter to increase participation.

J. Michaels noted she had not yet submitted comments but had ideas to share and suggested providing an opportunity for ongoing public input. J. Cronin emphasized the importance of defining parameters for the discussion, including identifying which ideas are within scope, and recommended developing a timeline toward a formal proposal. P. Branton noted the Commission is working toward a Town Meeting Day 2028 deadline, at which time voters may be asked to consider options such as amending, renewing, or terminating the easement. He also clarified that the Conservation Commission's role is to inform the public about the easement and the process. C. Gott added that the Selectboard will ultimately determine the ballot questions presented to voters.

J. Michaels also raised questions regarding the river and whether additional studies may be needed, and asked how public ideas would be incorporated into the process. C. Gott suggested expanding Survey Question #5 to include the March 10 Stowe Land Trust document outlining four potential options. K. Barrett asked follow-up questions regarding modification of easement terms and noted that the Stowe Land Trust retains the right to accept or reject proposed changes.

Easement 101 Kick-Off Event

Staff presented a preliminary agenda for the kickoff event for discussion. Members agreed to hold the event in early June and then transition directly into summer engagement activities and stakeholder meetings. The Commission selected Monday, June 8 as the event date. Members considered several venue options and agreed to hold the meeting in the Memorial Room to allow for both in-person attendance and a Zoom option. K. Barrett suggested including a comment or suggestion box to allow participants to provide input during the event. The Commission discussed whether the kickoff event should include a presentation on the natural resources of Mayo Farm. P. Branton suggested that topic may be better suited as a separate presentation, with the kickoff event focused primarily on the conservation easement. Staff will reach out to the Stowe Land Trust to determine whether they can present the results of the Natural Resources Inventory for Mayo Farm at a future meeting.

P. Moody raised the idea of forming a "Friends of Mayo Farm" group to help guide and steward the property as the 2028 decision point approaches. K. Barrett expressed support for the concept, noting the value of broader community involvement. P. Lambert observed that many attendees at the meeting live near Mayo Farm and questioned how aware the broader community is of the issues. J. Michaels emphasized that the kickoff event should clearly focus on the easement, including what is and is not allowed, and clearly define what is within and outside the scope of consideration.

Joint Stewardship Projects with SLT

Staff reported that she recently met with staff from the Stowe Land Trust to brainstorm potential collaborative activities aimed at celebrating Mayo Farm and encouraging community use of the property. Proposed ideas included invasive plant removal, installing tree protection (e.g., wire wrapping to prevent beaver damage), guided nature walks, and a scavenger hunt for children. Members were interested in the events. Staff will follow-up with Stowe Land Trust.

Members discussed potential themes for a nature walk, noting that beaver activity is often time-dependent. C. Gott suggested that topics such as river dynamics, riparian buffers, flood resilience, and the river corridor might be interesting. Additional ideas included focusing on the property's flora, forested areas, and riparian plantings. Members also discussed how Mayo Farm functions informally as a large dog park area. The Commission discussed potentially engaging the Lamoille County photography community to document and showcase images of Mayo Farm.

The Commission discussed its recent meeting with the Recreation Commission and noted that survey responses indicate clear community interest in exploring potential housing at the site. Members discussed the benefit of meeting early with the Housing Task Force, potentially on May 6, to engage key stakeholders and help inform next steps. C. Gott supported scheduling this meeting, and staff will follow up.

Members also discussed holding a joint meeting with the Selectboard to provide an update on the anticipated Mayo Farm process before planning progresses too far. A potential joint meeting date of April 8 was identified, and C. Gott indicated availability. Finally, staff noted that the local school was excited about being named Conservationist of the Year and invited the Commission to attend a Friday Morning Meeting on April 3 to present the award. R. Krukar and C. Gott indicated they would be able to attend.

General Reports & Updates & Correspondence

Be Bear Aware banner will be installed next week. Otherwise, no updates or correspondence was shared.

Next Meeting Date: TBD

Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned shortly after 7:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah McShane