

Hopkinton Conservation Commission

May 19, 2026 Meeting

Held at the Hopkinton Town Hall

5/19/2026 Minutes – Approved 6/16/26

Present: Ron Klemarczyk, Rob Knight, Bonnie Christie, Molly Hardenbergh, Katherine Mitchell, Scott Clay, Bob LaPree

Absent: Stephanie Kratsios

Visitors: Jeff Lewis and Kevin Porter from the Concord Conservation Commission
Mike Tardiff, Central NH Regional Planning Commission

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Ron Klemarczyk, Chair.

1. Visitors from the Concord Conservation Commission (CCC) introduced themselves: Jeff Lewis, Vice Chair; Kevin Porter, Commissioner. Jeff said the CCC has a goal of meeting annually with neighboring towns to compare practices and identify areas of mutual concern. CCC has paid staff consisting of a planner, a trails ranger, and a forester. CCC has a trails subcommittee. Current focus of the CCC is watershed management e.g., the Turkey River (which Hopkinton shares with Concord), and invasive species. The CCC is currently updating their Forestry Management Plan. Unlike Hopkinton, Concord has a lot of agricultural land.

Ron explained that Hopkinton also has a trails committee, but unlike Concord, Hopkinton has an Open Space Committee which identifies properties for conservation and works to get funding for purchases.

Discussed the potential to link Concord trails with Hopkinton via District #5 road.

Bonnie is on the NHACC board and a current NHACC initiative is to encourage more regional collaboration by conservation commissions, as Concord is doing.

Molly feels conservation education is very important, and town commissions could hold joint workshops like Hopkinton's recent wetlands presentation.

Another potential area of cooperation is combatting invasives. CCC is working with the Northeast Forestry program as a source of funding.

At 7:40 the CCC visitors left the meeting.

2. Natural Resources Chapter of the town's Master Plan: Mike Tardiff, Executive Director of the Central NH Regional Planning Commission, reported on progress on the planned town survey.

Discussed the survey. It should have an educational component, but just a sentence or two for each question so people are not discouraged from completing the survey by too much information. It is important to get feedback from the community on our goals. Questions should show potential trade-offs e.g., effect on taxes or housing. Respondents should be able to indicate how strongly they support issues, not just yes/no answers. Results from the survey will show where more public education is needed. Educational meetings can then be organized.

Mike's goal is to get the survey out in June, since summer is not a good time for getting survey responses. There was a survey done in 2022, but a new survey is needed to support the Master Plan.

Next step: Mike will convert comments from the HCC members into a draft survey and send it to HCC members. HCC members should send comments back to Mike before the HCC's June 16 meeting. Mike will not be able to attend the June 16 meeting.

Mike Tardiff left the meeting at 8:10.

3. HCC minutes for April 21, 2026 were accepted as amended. HCC minutes for May 5, 2026 were accepted, with Ron abstaining.
4. HCC mail: No mail received.
5. Treasurer's report: Katherine reported \$190,183 in the Conservation account, and \$5,024 in the Town Forest account as of May 18. Katherine and Rob have met with Finance Director Kelly Henley to better understand how HCC funds are handled. Kelly only reconciles HCC accounts every six months, so the bank balances do not accurately reflect the HCC's actual funds. There may be expenses and/or income not posted. Katherine is going to run her own ledger so we know how much money we actually have available. Katherine will send out a new reimbursement form and she requests that the form be submitted in duplicate, to assist in keeping track of HCC expenses.
Change of use tax bills were not sent out in 2025, and have just been mailed. The HCC should be getting some change of use income. None was received in 2025.
6. Brockway Preserve bridge across the dam: The Dam Bureau notified Ron that they cannot approve a new bridge until they model impact on the road downstream if the dam was breached. They will have more information in June.
7. Karen's Woods footbridges: Ron showed a sketch map of the bridge locations and trails. One is 14' and the other is 12'. Materials will cost \$800 - \$850. The trail across the Martin property that connects with Jeff Dearborn's parking lot needs a bridge. Discussed whether it is prudent to spend money on a bridge for a trail without a permanent trail easement. Rob pointed out that we put in two bridges on Tim Sweatt's property before we had a permanent trail easement. Rob suggested a bridge would be a reasonable investment.
The map showed a rouge trail in green which crosses Pellerin and Crathern properties. The trail will be discussed at the Trails Committee meeting May 27.
8. S&M Forest Trust subdivision on Jewett Road – Bruce Stockwell: Nothing new to report.
9. Dustin Woods trails: The new trail along the bluff has been roughed out. Now that the tentative route has been established, Rob is working on getting formal permissions for the trail, as outlined in the conservation easement. The Dustins have signed off, and now the request will go to Five Rivers. Five Rivers has up to 60 days to approve the request. Discussed the need for the planned six car parking area, which will also need approval by the Dustins and Five Rivers. Ron will make a plan for the parking area to be used with a request for approval, so we will have approval when we are ready to start work on the parking area.
Rob is still working on developing signage for the Dustin trails. Signs should include one warning about the steep bluffs.
10. Transfer Station fencing: Some of the litter has been cleaned up, but the fence is not up.
11. Wetland buffer variance request: Ron expects there will be a lot of requests similar to the one discussed at our May 5 emergency meeting. The HCC should weigh in on requested variances, but the timing could be problematic since the ZBA meets the first Tuesday of the month. Both Molly and Bonnie suggested that the HCC should have special meetings when necessary, so the HCC can provide written testimony. The Planning Office will be giving the HCC more prompt notice regarding wetland buffer variance requests.

12. Legislative update: Bonnie reported several problematic bills have been tabled, including a bill to allow data centers to be built by right.
13. Commission membership: Ron will again remind Karen Hambleton that one of our members has disappeared and should be formally removed from the HCC.
14. Planning board: Molly reports that the conceptual proposal for a 6 – 8 lot conservation subdivision on Branch Londonderry has again been presented to the board. Each house lot would have its own conservation area. The conservation areas would not be contiguous and would be owned by each homeowner individually. Discussed whether that would meet the intent of the conservation subdivision regulation. ADU's would be designated affordable or workforce housing. It is not clear if ADU's can be so designated. The HCC can weigh in on these issues.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM. Next HCC meeting is scheduled for 7:00 on June 16, 2026 at the Town Hall.

Minutes submitted by Robert Knight, Secretary.