

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
SUFFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

**APRIL 14, 2026
7:00 P.M.**

**Town Hall
145 Bridge Street, Suffield, CT**

RECEIVED

By Michele Urch at 4:12 pm, Apr 21, 2026

Commissioners present: Chairman Art Christian, Vice-Chairman Glenn Neilson, Norm John Noble, Gary Phelps, Kathy Bielonko – Alternate and Tom Elmore – Alternate

Commissioners absent: Ray Wilcox, Beth Fanous and Jessica McCue

Also present: Keith Morris, Conservation Consultant (Via Zoom)

CALL MEETING TO ORDER – 7:00 P.M.

Chairman Christian called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and assigned Commissioner Wilcox's voting rights to alternate member Kathy Bielonko and Commissioner Fanous's voting rights to alternate member Tom Elmore for this evening.

Consultant Morris read the agenda aloud.

INFORMAL DISCUSSION

1. Logging – 1090 Mountain Road

During the informal discussion regarding 1090 Mountain Road, Mark Mueller of Hull Forest Products represented the property owner to outline a logging operation located just past the local cemetery. The project involves a "prescriptive thinning" of approximately 30 acres, where 30–40% of the trees—ranging from small firewood to larger saw timber—will be removed specifically to improve the overall health of the forest. Mr. Mueller emphasized that the work would take place primarily in the back of the property, utilizing an existing road that runs straight back from the barn, with a loading area situated off the driveway near the house to keep trucks off the main road.

The applicant confirmed there will be no stream or wetland crossings during the process. Regarding the remaining debris, Mueller stated that brush would be spread across the site rather than piled, and would be maintained at knee height or lower to ensure it remains manageable and aesthetically acceptable. The operation is tentatively scheduled to begin in late April or May 2026, depending on the completion of another project.

Vice-Chairman Neilson MOTIONED and Commissioner Bielonko seconded to accept the plan “as of right” allowing them to proceed. Vote: 6-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

DECISION

1. **Permit #1742 - Zack & Sons, LLC - Single Family Home - East Street North. This property is located on the east side of East Street North. Assessor's Map 86H, Block 53, Lot 144**

The Commission reviewed Permit 1742 for a single-family home on the northern parcel of a two-lot development on East Street North. Although the southern lot was previously approved, Staff reported that the applicant had already begun clearing the northern lot and moving "mammoth amounts" of soil without formal approval. The applicant explained he used an existing 30-to-40-year-old driveway cutout to access the site and avoid traffic hazards on Route 159.

Due to a 13-foot elevation change and recent soil seepage onto the highway during heavy rain, the Commission expressed alarm over the bare slopes. To address this, they mandated that the applicant immediately excavate the slopes to a 1:3 pitch to allow for stabilization and mowing, followed by immediate hydro-seeding. Regarding drainage, the applicant committed to diverting all rooftop and footing drain water toward the forested rear of the property, which extends 300 to 500 feet.

Vice-Chairman Neilson MOTIONED and Commissioner Phelps second to approve with standard conditions (1–11) and additional conditions as follows: 12) must begin the 1:3 slope excavation immediately and install additional silt fencing for the northerly neighbor, and 13) perform immediate hydro-seeding to stabilize the site. Vote: 6-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

The Commission warned that the operation would be shut down if these measures were not prioritized.

PLAN ACCEPTANCE:

1. Permit #1743 – RD3 Property Services, LLC (applicant) – Retaining Wall – Lakeview Drive Extension. This property is located at 471 Lakeview Drive Ext. Assessor’s Map 10H, Block 3, Lot 171

Mr. Morris provided an overview of Permit 1743, submitted by RD3 Property Services, which involves the construction of a retaining wall at 471 Lake View Drive. Mr. Morris noted that this contractor has already completed several similar walls in that specific area. A critical factor in this application is that the wall is designed to be 16 feet back from the shoreline, meaning the construction will take place entirely on land. This positioning is important because it ensures the project does not fall under the jurisdiction of Southwick, which would occur if the work were performed in the water. Mr. Morris also observed that there should be enough room to install a silt fence for erosion control without encroaching on the lake

Commissioner Noble MOTIONED and Vice-Chairman Neilson seconded to accept as presented and to be placed on the April 28, 2026 agenda for final decision. Vote: 6-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

The commission asked Mr. Morris to contact Norm Cheever in Southwick regarding this plan.

2. Permit \$1744 – Phelps (applicant) – Single Family Home – Phelps Road. This property is located on the north side of Phelps Road. Assessor’s Map 5, Block 9, Lot 46A

Mr. Morris provided an overview of Permit 1744 which is an application for the construction of a single-family home on Phelps Road. Mr. Morris characterized the proposal as "pretty straightforward" and noted that the application appeared to be in good order with no visible red flags. Key details regarding the application's readiness include complete documentation, as Mr. Morris confirmed that the commission has a full set of drawings and that the North Central Health District review indicates everything is complete. Additionally, the wetlands have already been flagged on-site, allowing for a clear understanding of the environmental constraints before a decision is made.

Commissioner Noble MOTIONED and Commissioner Bielonko seconded to accept as presented and to be placed on the April 28, 2026 agenda for final decision. Vote: 6-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously

PUBLIC HEARING:

1. Permit #1741 – Peak Mountain Development LLC (applicant) – 7 single family homes – South Grand Street. This property is located on the west side of South Grand Street. Assessor’s Map 18, Block 21, Lots 15 & 15A

Chairman Christian opened the public hearing at 7:30 p.m. The public hearing for Permit 1741, a proposal by Kirk McNaughton of Peak Mountain Development LLC for seven single-family homes on 39.1 acres on South Grand Street, continued with a detailed focus on environmental and engineering verifications. Soil scientist Ian Cole defended his field delineation of 13.05 acres of wetlands, which was independently verified by the town’s third-party consultant, George Logan of REMA, who utilized baseline data he had gathered from the site in 2023. Cole noted that his field investigation identified an additional pocket of forested wetland, trapped by the road, that was not present on the town's original mapping. Both experts concluded that this area lacks the hydrology to support vernal pool habitat, as the ponding is only three to five inches deep and lacks the necessary hydroperiod to sustain species like wood frogs or spotted salamanders before drying out following leaf-out.

Regarding infrastructure and stormwater, a comprehensive drainage report prepared by Alfred Associates indicated that replacing current agricultural fields with vegetated lawns and meadows would actually decrease overall runoff. The acting town engineer, Dana Steele, reviewed the report and agreed with these findings, though he recommended several technical conditions, such as shortening roof and footing drains to keep outlets far from wetland boundaries and using schedule 80 PVC or HDPE for driveway culverts. To ensure long-term wetland protection, the applicant agreed to install permanent metal placards on metal posts every 50 to 100 feet along the wetland boundaries of each lot, providing a physical marker for future homeowners. Additionally, the developer offered to donate a 12-acre wetland parcel to the Suffield Land **Conservancy**, which would create a contiguous stretch of protected open space by connecting to existing conservancy land.

The Commission engaged in a significant debate concerning **drainage and potential flooding** for neighboring properties. The applicant argued that **gravity-fed footing drains** are superior for long-term homeowner reliability, as they avoid the mechanical failure risks associated with sump pumps. However, some Commission members raised concerns that the project is a "**wet site**" and that neighbors across the street already deal with water issues, suggesting the use of "**Cultech**" **collection tanks** to better mitigate sheet flow from driveways and roofs.

Chairman Christian opened the hearing to public comment.

Richard Evans, 61 N. Main Street, East Granby – Mr. Evans, the main abutter to the property, provided additional information pertaining to the proposed development, the vernal pools and the water table level along with other information that could negatively impact the surrounding properties if the project were to move forward. He requested the Public Hearing remain open allowing him additional time to hire his own soil consultant as he feels the two opinions thus far are incorrect.

Chairman Christian and the commission considered Mr. Evans information and request to keep the hearing open and determined that the hearing had been open for 35 days of its 45-day statutory window and would require the approval of the applicant in order to remain open. Mr. McNaughton agreed to allow the public hearing to remain open for an additional two weeks and signed a document for the record. recommended closing the public hearing while allowing time to incorporate the latest technical feedback into a formal motion for the next meeting.

Vice-Chairman Neilson MOTIONED and Commissioner Phelps seconded to continue the Public Haring to the next meeting scheduled for April 28, 2026 to allow the abutter to obtain a soil scientist to conduct independent tests on the property. Vote: 6-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE MARCH 24, 2026 MEETING

It was noted that the body of water at Sunrise Park should be identified as a pond and not a lake.

Commissioner Noble MOTIONED and Commissioner Bielonko seconded to approve the minutes from the March 24, 2026 meeting with the change as noted. Vote: 6-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Bielonko MOTIONED and Commissioner Phelps seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by,

Kristen O. Lambert
Recording Secretary