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By Michele Urch at 3:59 pm, Nov 17, 2026

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE SUFFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION NOVEMBER 10, 2026 7:00 P.M.

83 Mountain Road Lower Level Meeting Room Suffield, CT

Commissioners present: Chairman Art Christian, Vice-Chairman Glenn Neilson, Ray Wilcox, Norm John Noble, Jessica McCue, and Kathy Bielonko – Alternate

Commissioners absent: Gary Phelps and Beth Fanous

Also present: Keith Morris, Conservation Consultant, Lee Corbert, Director of Public Works and Kim Fletcher, Barton and Loguidice

CALL MEETING TO ORDER – 7:00 P.M.

Chairman Christian called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and assigned voting rights to Commissioner Bielonko in the absence of Commissioner Fanous. He announced that the Public Hearing for Permit No. 1749 – MI 22 LLC, concerning a proposed multifamily development on South Main Street, had been continued to December 8, 2026, and would not be heard this evening. He asked Consultant Morris to read the agenda aloud.

INFORMAL DISCUSSION:

1. **Director of Public Works – Culvert replacement – Suffield, Hickory Streets and Copper Hill Road**

Suffield Street: Ms. Fletcher explained that the existing three-foot reinforced concrete pipe had deteriorated, with the headwalls separating from the pipe and resulting in the road closure. The proposed replacement is a 16-by-5-foot box culvert designed for a 50-year storm event, maintaining the existing roadway profile and two 14-foot travel lanes. The design provides more than seven feet of freeboard and was evaluated to prevent roadway overtopping during a 100-year storm.

The project will involve approximately 42 square feet of temporary wetland impacts for construction activities and 39 square feet of permanent impacts for riprap installation to prevent erosion and scour. Due to poor soil conditions, sheet piling and temporary cofferdams will be needed to isolate the work area and allow construction in dry conditions. Fletcher confirmed that the necessary DEEP Fisheries and Army Corps approvals had been obtained.

Commissioners discussed the limited wetland impacts and the urgency of completing the project given the road closure's effect on school bus and emergency vehicle access. The Commission agreed to expedite its review rather than defer consideration until the next regular meeting.

Vice-Chairman Neilson MOTIONED and Commissioner Wilcox seconded to approve the project by summary ruling, with the Commission's standard Permit Conditions 1 through 11, appropriate erosion and

sedimentation controls and engineering oversight during construction and a waiver of the application fee. The motion carried unanimously.

Hickory Street: Ms. Fletcher reviewed the existing 1930 bridge over Four Mile Brook, which has a 10-foot span and has deteriorated due to scour along its walls. The proposed replacement is a 19-foot, three-sided concrete frame with an eight-foot rise, designed for a 100-year flood event. Steel piles will be required because of poor soil conditions. The new structure will include crash-tested railings and a wider travel area while generally maintaining the existing roadway alignment. Hydraulic modeling indicates the roadway will not overtop during a 100-year storm, and the design provides 3.3 feet of freeboard.

Construction will require a temporary stream bypass and cofferdams, resulting in approximately 130 square feet of temporary wetland impacts, which will be restored after construction. Approximately 90 square feet of permanent impacts will result from riprap installation to prevent erosion and scour. Ms. Fletcher confirmed that the project had received DEEP Fisheries approval and met the Army Corps of Engineers' nationwide permit requirements.

Commissioners discussed drainage from the surrounding watershed, including the area near Brome's Pond, and emphasized maintaining adequate water flow during construction. Mr. Corbert indicated that work was expected to begin in March, with all three culvert projects targeted for completion by approximately June. Bids were expected December 3, and the Town was exploring potential savings by awarding multiple projects to one contractor.

Vice-Chairman Neilson MOTIONED and Commissioner Wilcox seconded to approve the Hickory Street project by summary ruling, subject to the standard Permit Conditions 1 through 11, with a waiver of the application fee. The Commission noted that the required state and federal approvals had been obtained and emphasized the importance of proper construction controls and hydraulic management. The motion carried unanimously.

Copper Hill Road: Ms. Fletcher explained that the existing structure over Mountain Brook consisted of two collapsed corrugated metal pipes, resulting in roadway failure and closure. The proposed replacement is a 28-foot clear-span, three-sided frame with a seven-and-one-half-foot rise, designed for a 100-year flood event and evaluated for a 500-year event. The design will maintain two 12-foot travel lanes, include safety railings, and generally follow the existing roadway alignment, with a minor adjustment to the road profile to reduce winter icing. Micropiles will be required due to poor soil conditions.

Because the existing pipes cannot serve as a temporary stream bypass, construction will require sheet piling and a temporary bypass system. The work will result in temporary wetland impacts, with permanent impacts limited to approximately 10 square feet for riprap installation. Fletcher explained that pumps and stone wells will be used to manage water during construction while maintaining the existing pond elevation and downstream flows. She confirmed that the project had received DEEP Fisheries approval. Commissioners emphasized the importance of carefully managing water flow and encouraged the Town to advance the project promptly to restore access to the closed roadway.

Vice-Chairman Neilson MOTIONED and Commissioner McCue seconded to approve the Copper Hill Road project by summary ruling, subject to the standard Permit Conditions 1 through 11, with a waiver of the application fee. The Commission emphasized the importance of maintaining water levels, controlling erosion, and ensuring appropriate oversight during construction. The motion carried unanimously.

DECISION:

1. **Permit #1752 – Casadei – Logging – Firestone Drive. This property is located at the end of Firestone Drive. Assessor's Map 28H, Block 37, Lot 1.**

Chris Casadei, a certified forester representing the property owner, presented a selective logging proposal intended to improve forest health and diversity by removing diseased and undesirable trees. The work would involve temporary disturbance within the 100-foot vernal pool buffer but would not include clear-cutting, stumping, or grubbing. Mr. Casadei explained that the existing logging road would be used, at least 50 percent canopy cover would be maintained, and trees would be directionally felled using mechanized equipment to minimize soil disturbance. Operations would occur only under dry, frozen-ground, or snow-covered conditions and follow DEEP forestry best management practices.

Commissioners McCue and Noble summarized their site walk, noting limited understory and tree diversity, interconnected wetland areas, and proposed tree removals as close as approximately 17 feet from identified vernal pools. Although commissioners acknowledged the conservation objectives of the proposal and Mr. Casadei's forestry experience, they expressed concern about applying the existing 100-foot non-disturbance buffer to timber harvesting. Discussion focused on whether forestry activities should be treated differently from construction or development, whether a smaller buffer might be appropriate, and the Commission's authority to establish conditions or amend its regulations. Commissioners agreed that additional clarification was needed regarding the distinction between forestry and other activities, the Commission's authority to establish appropriate conditions, and the potential need to amend the regulations. Members also discussed consulting the Town Attorney before establishing a policy that could affect future applications.

Vice – Chairman Neilson MOTIONED and Commissioner Wilcox to table Permit No. 1752 pending consultation with the Town Attorney regarding the regulations and their application to timber harvesting within vernal pool buffers. Motion passed unanimously**.**

Chairman Christian recused himself from the discussion regarding Permit #1749 and left the room.

PUBLIC HEARING:

1. **Permit #1749 – MI 22 LLC (owner) – Multi-Family Development – South Main Street. This property is located on the east side of South Main Street, nearest intersection being Barry Place. Assessor's Map 44H, Lot 47. Block 216A.**

The Commission formally considered the applicant's request to continue the public hearing for the proposed multi-family development on South Main Street to December 8, 2026.

Commissioner Noble MOTIONED and Commissioner McCue seconded to continue the Public Hearing for Permit #1749 to December 8, 2026 at the applications request. Motion passed unanimously.

The Commission also discussed retaining George Logan as an independent soil scientist to review the proposed wetland delineations associated with the application. The review will focus particularly on the proposed sanitary sewer extension, including approximately 400 feet of sewer line, and the stormwater retention basin. Members requested a comprehensive review of the wetland boundaries and related information before the continued public hearing. It was noted that the applicant would be responsible for the consultant's fees.

Commissioner Noble MOTIONED and Commissioner Bielonko seconded to retain George Logan to conduct a review of the proposed wetland delineations associated with Permit #1749, including the sewer extension, the sewer line and the stormwater retention basin. Vote: 5 in favor (Noble, Bielonko, McCue, Wilcox and Neilson) and 1 abstain (Christian.) Motion passed,

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Eric Boone, 65 Barry Place
- Bob Parks, 30 Barry Place
- Mike Stiles, 40 Barry Place
- Nicole Baker, 384 South Main Street

Chairman Christian returned to the meeting upon completion of Public Comment.

CONSULTANT'S REPORT

Mr. Morris discussed the availability of the online wetlands training program and reported that technical issues with the website appeared to have been resolved. Members were reminded that state law requires Commission members to complete eight hours of wetlands training by the applicable deadlines of January 1 and March 1. Mr. Morris noted that members had previously received information regarding the training and offered assistance to anyone experiencing difficulty accessing the program. He also noted that the Board of Selectmen must be notified regarding members' completion of the required training.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE OCTOBER 27, 2026 MEETING

Commissioner Noble MOTIONED and Commissioner Bielonko seconded to approve the minutes from the October 27, 2026 meeting with one change as noted at the end of the discussion regarding McNaughton property and lot 15C. Motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted by,

Kristen O. Lambert
Recording Secretary