

Westford Conservation Commission

Draft meeting minutes – March 18, 2026

Westford Town Office

WCC Members present: Kirsten Tyler (RKT), Sarah Pinto (SEP), Joel Fay (JF), Elias Rosenblatt (ER)

Members of public: Kyle Buck (UVM), Logan Devaney, Grayson Doninger (UVM), Rachel Trokenheim (UVM), Pheobe Barrett (UVM)

6:00 pm: Meeting called to order by RKT

No changes were made to February meeting minutes. ER moved to approve minutes, JF seconded the motion, unanimous approval. One change was made to the March meeting agenda to discuss additional resources for grant applications.

6:07 pm: No public comment

6:07 pm: Updates on UVM capstone project

Phoebe Barrett (PT) provided carbon copy renderings of potential landscape use ideas for the 1705 natural area that could be made into a community area. The goal is to provide a starting point for public surveys to see what the town of Westford would be interested in for greenspace infrastructure and layout. PT showed 4 design tiers, each building off of the lower tier(s), starting with a simple path through the property down to the Browns River (Tier 0), adding walking access to waterfront, benches, and informational kiosks on ecosystems (Tier 1), adding water access of some kind (e.g. dock), adding stairs to path for steeper sections, adding a pavilion and additional benches (Tier 2), and adding an additional pavilion, amphitheater, and a dedicated parking lot (Tier 3).

SEP and RKT raised question about placement of septic system within this landscape design, and whether this will alter the landscape design. UVM reps indicated that this landscape design proposal was very much a conceptual start, and that they roughly have accommodated the planned septic system into the layout of the different tiers, but certainly nothing official (this detail will come later).

SEP notes that the overall design is based on the assumption that the existing buildings on the 1705 property are no longer present. The UVM reps indicate that these designs are flexible, and will not be impeded by a building being present. SEP reminds the WCC that permits will be required for this. JF suggests that this could be a phased rollout, both for fund raising efforts and for intentional discussion in town for what is desired.

Grayson Doninger presented a summary of Act 21 for public information, which emphasizes increasing community resilience, flood resilience, and changes in flood insurance requirements.

Rachel Trokenheim mentioned that the education team in the capstone class wasn't able to attend, but working on an outreach strategy. Capstone course is engaging with the Winooski NRCD for community tree plantings at local schools. There may be opportunity for such tree plantings as a riparian strip on the 1705 property. Grants exist for this work, including the VT Fine Arts Grant (\$500), which could be used for 1705 art installations or art gallery space, or a mural. Logan Devaney mentions that there is an Artist in Residence grant for similar projects (\$40k).

Kyle Buck mentioned that the Data team from the capstone course is currently running the resiliency index for the Winooski watershed, and will run it next on a property level for Westford, with focus on 1705. This resiliency index compiles information on community and flood resilience for town planning. JF suggests that site history for 1705 should be integrated into exhibits and signage.

Additional ideas were pitched for data collection by students and other programs involved with community science efforts to monitor aquatic systems, and that 1705 would be a great spot for this.

RKT – Would the resilience index group be ready to present to the selectboard? UVM team gives the affirmative, and they would present the Westford map and present index impacts for different landscape design tiers.

Action item: UVM capstone class comes to a selectboard meeting in April to present work and recommendations to the SB and the town.

6:50 PM: Watershed grant was award to WCC! This funding aligns well with the materials that the UVM capstone course is working on.

Kyle Buck (UVM) mentions that the education Team is making lesson plans for schools and outreach materials for the community, that could be used under this awarded grant. Perhaps some sort of portable material/object for community events. ER suggested reaching out to the ECHO center as they have developed many community outreach materials that are mobile. These opportunities could be extended to watershed monitoring purposes.

RKT also mentioned that acting WCC member Elizabeth Ploof has been in correspondence with the UVM capstone course education team.

7:05 pm: Grant resources

Logan Devaney shared that Lake Champlain Basin Program has yet to publish request for proposals (RFPs), but there should be many opportunities. There are typically many RFPs posted, each targeted on particular issues. However, we could apply for multiple RFPs to supplement funding raised from other grants for particular projects.

RKT asked who would lead grant projects as WCC has limited capacity. Logan Devaney stated that we can leverage partnerships in these proposals, and even budget for additional contracted help.

Emerald Ash Borer discussion tabled

Action Item: WCC members to provide comments on legal trails policy and Landowner Communication document

7:13 pm: Other business

Action Item: SEP to submit newsletter content including:

- Muddy Trails
- Ticks
- Watershed grant awarded to WCC.

7:15 pm: ER moves to adjourn, JF seconds, unanimous approval for adjournment.