

JOHNSON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 11, 2025

Present: Lois Frey, Sue Lovering, Noel Dodge, Dean Locke, Adrian Schmidt

Absent: Peter Hammond

Guest: Linda Benezra

The May minutes were approved. June, July, and August had no quorums and therefore, no formal minutes.

NEW MEMBER RECRUITMENT

Jared Jasinski has resigned. We need to find three committed new members who are passionate about our interests and willing to do the job consistently. People uniformly expressed interest in the environment in the two surveys we did, so there must be folks who fit those parameters.

Noel wondered if Diana Osborne might be inspired to join us.

JCC CONTACTS LIST

Dean currently has six emails collected for the contacts list. He committed to setting up a document that will be sent to Lois by September 19.

Sue has a list of emails from folks who have signed up for CC and Tree Board events; she will forward those to Lois, along with contacts of other folks who have expressed interest in the natural world.

POLLINATOR GARDENS

They're Sue's project now and she has an updated plan. The timeframe for installing them is highlighted in red:

August 8, 2025

Plan for Wescom pollinator gardens beginning fall, 2025

The two Wescom pollinator gardens that were seeded in fall of 2024 are in various states of being incomplete. The piece nearest Rt 15 (#3) was never rototilled, while the other two were. Sadly, in July someone mowed the second garden and parts of the first one, destroying about 60% of the plants. The only plants to survive in the second piece are several California poppies.

To bring the two planted gardens, along with the piece that was overlooked in spring, 2024, to a productive condition, here are the steps we should take:

- First garden, nearest the pulloff: This was rototilled and seeded last fall. It is flowering now. Unfortunately, only one pass with the tiller was done, leaving the field lumpy and full of rooted grass. Since there is good bloom and future seeding here, we'll add to the seeds and perennial plants in late September or October. When planting, we'll remove large clumps of grass and replace with seeds or plants.
- Second garden: there are only California poppies here, an annual native to the western states. This piece should be widened and rototilled four times, large grass clumps removed, smoothed, and seeded/planted in the fall of 2025. Before rototilling, we need to collect seed from the poppies growing now.

- The third piece, nearest Rt 15, should be flagged and rototilled four times, large clumps of grass removed, smoothed, and seeded/planted in fall of 2025.
- Around the edges of all three gardens will be mowed a smooth walkable path 4 feet wide, with a four foot wide path connecting them. Two paths can be mowed from the gardens to the road, one at each end. The rest should be allowed to grow, while keeping invasives out and brush trimmed.
- Signage will be added. Two or three that explain pollinators, types of plants to use, and other information. One will have a map and plant legend. One will be the main sign designating the gardens. The present 'Do not mow' signs will remain in the hopes that they'll be minded.
- Buzz Osgood, who lives at Wescom Park, has offered and been gratefully accepted, to mow the paths for us and to mow the gardens after frost.

Time frame:

September 11: Mow down the pieces to be rototilled. Flag them. Ryan Speer will rototill the second and third pieces. Ryan mowed the patches before rototilling.

August-September: Individuals gather seeds where appropriate, dig plants for transplanting. Sue can give plants if someone will help dig them and transport.

Late September- October: mow paths and edges. Dig perennials at Sue's.

Mid October: Front Porch Forum post for helpers on the 18th.

October 18, 9-2:00: Work day set to spread seed and plant perennials.

End September through October: Signage done and installed.

May, 2026: Wallow in flowers

Note: one stem 6" high of Japanese knotweed was found in the garden in July, 2025. We'll need to survey and remove any we find before rototilling.

Adrian volunteered his housemates and himself to dig plants in Sue's fields. Dean offered to cut a log that's obstructing the road to them; he'll do that before Friday, the 19th.

Sue will order wildflower seed, as well as collect seed from her garden.

Meanwhile, Bee the Change has installed 4 signs at the first garden. There was no call as to the day they were to be here, so it was a pleasant surprise to find them there. They were funded by the Pomerleau Foundation.

GOMO TOWN FOREST

Peter hasn't made progress on the Gomo survey. Assessor Justin Mason gave Lois a copy of the easement for the driveway in question but it doesn't answer pertinent questions.

Nothing has been heard from Mike Green regarding his plan. Adrian will call Mike about doing it before winter.

JCC BROCHURE

Sue designed and had printed 250 new brochures that explain how swell we are and what we do. We'll put them in the grocery store, town offices, library, and hopefully, the Woolen Mill.

VRC SIGNS

The River Conservancy installed their new signs on the Beard's kiosk and on a mini-kiosk along the path at Journey's End.

JOURNEY'S END

The for-sale parcel abutting the JE path is being marketed as a "rare gem". We can't figure that out, but we think it would make a swell parking lot. The price has dropped to \$95K.

The JE benches still haven't been anchored, so Adrian took on that responsibility. One bench has been moved and there is evidence of a firepit. The good news is that Lois saw no knotweed this year and she feels that it has been cleaner this season.

It turns out we do own the far side of the brook, so ought to think about that knotweed.

LUMBER

Jared still has JCC lumber that was bought for bat houses at his home. Noel will pick it up and store it.

OBSERVATIONS

Lois and Linda have been seeing bottle gentians in bloom along trails.

It's a good mast year.

There are deer all over the place.

MISC

- There will be a regional meeting of Conservation Commissions at the Hardwick Library on October 11. Lois and Sue have signed up.
- Noel, who was sentenced to bring a maple cream pie to this meeting, has had his sentence doubled.
- Absent: Peter Hammond, who shall, by the sentence of the JCC Court, be required to present a MCP at the October meeting.
- The judiciary will bring forks.
- Call Linda a half-guest because it was like having two Loises. But unlike Lois, she declined to snark.
- In wildlife news, woodchucks have walkabouts.