

JOHNSON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 15, 2026

Present: Lois Frey, Sue Lovering, Noel Dodge, Dean Locke, Adrian Schmidt, Peter Hammond, Justin Hennard

Guest: Linda Benezra

After much complaining from those who probably never read them, the December minutes were approved.

Agenda change: The Green Mountain Club's Molly Flanagan will reschedule her visit.

Sue added a report about the flea market sale.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions' dues of \$50 are due. In due course, Lois took care of it.

The budget is in good shape, with \$1285 expected for the next fiscal year. \$250 will be added to the reserve fund.

Sue will send receipts for seeds and signs to Lois for the pollinator garden project.

GOMO TOWN FOREST

There has been no movement on the town's part to advance a Gomo survey. Considering the fact that we aren't sure whether the expense of roads and trucking would outstrip income from logging, we unhappily arrived at the conclusion that the project is a moot point.

Some good news is that Gomo will be conserved as prime agricultural land as part of the industrial park adjustment.

BLACK ASH

Eric Nuse, who will speak to monitoring black ash, has rescheduled his visit to next month.

WETLANDS RULES

The state is discussing changes to wetlands rules that will, in some cases, enable development in or near fragile areas. Conservation commissions have been asked to comment. Though we cottoned onto this request too late to be heard, we agreed with the many other CCs that have posted their aggrieved responses to the easing of restrictions on Front Porch Forum through AVCC.

Noel explained the many confusing details of this legislation and pointed out that wetland maps are not kept up to date, that inspections are not done when permitting is requested, and that no wetlands ecologists have been involved in this upcoming decision. As well, in some circumstances, wetlands rules are bypassed with the okay of the state.

Zoning is necessary in order to enforce wetlands rules, even though protection is included in town plans.

UPCOMING PRESENTATION

The CC, Library, and Historical Society will present 'River Memories: Exploring River Patterns and Settlements' on Saturday, February 21, at 2:00 at Jenna's House.

MARCH GLADNESS

- Noel, Dean, Adrian, and Justin will lead the first snowshoe trek on Sunday, February 15, at 10:00 on the university trails.
- On Saturday, February 28, Noel, Adrian, Peter, and Justin will do it again. Yet to be determined is whether it'll be at the university again or perhaps along the Long Trail and suspension bridge by Hogback.
- The third program is still up in the air; Eric Nuse may talk about black ash.
- A summer hike at Gomo was suggested.

Lois will check on snowshoe availability at the library.

JOURNEY'S END UPDATE

The two benches are still not anchored. Adrian promises to do it in the spring.

POTLUCK

This one was the best ever! Our guys are amazing chefs, would you believe it, and we all brought interesting, varied yumyums. And the taxpayers didn't even get billed!

Thanks go to Linda Benezra, who picked up and packed up.

FLEA MARKET

Lois, Linda, Adrian, and Sue spent a day at the Essex Expo flea market selling tasteful, donated items and raised \$545. for the reserve fund. Thank you, Adrian, for doing most of the heavy lifting and providing Venmo! We finally sold the last of the large Audubon prints. There is a pile of new and leftover merch under the bed in Sue's guest room to do another fundraiser at some point. When it reaches the five-year point, as it did in Lois' guest room, we'll shift it to Peter's house.

OBSERVATIONS

- Noel reports seeing ermine, weasel, and mice in the woods.
- Sue reports seeing mice without even going outside.

MISC

- Noel suggested a polar plunge as a fundraiser. Nobody jumped at it.
- Wildlife experts agree: the official Johnson rabbit call is "Bunnybunnybunnybunny" in a high, rabbit-like voice.

Adjourned at 9:00

Next meeting is on Thursday, February 19th, 2026 at the Municipal Building at 6:30.

Submitted by Sue Lovering, Secretary.