

**Town of Blackstone
Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
15 St. Paul
Street, Blackstone, MA 01504
January 14, 2026 - 6:00PM**

Town Clerk
Town of Blackstone
FEB 12 2026 RECD

Time: _____
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1. **Call to Order** – The Chair called the meeting to order.
2. **Roll Call/Attendance**

Members Present: Chairman Jordan Andrade, Ed Arsenault, Jingpeng Xu and Zachary Ensko. Not Present: Mike Catalano, Roxanne Ladoucer and Eric Heistand.

Also present remotely: Conservation Agent, John Lopez.

3. **Citizens' Inquiry/Good and Welfare for Public** – None.
4. **Enforcement/Complaints** – 57 Blackstone Street

Mr. Peter Blaise, present, resident of 57 Blackstone Street, addressed the Commission regarding longstanding drainage issues affecting his property and neighboring properties at 55 and 57 Blackstone Street. He stated that the drainage system in question was installed approximately 30 years ago and is no longer capable of retaining the volume of stormwater it receives. He noted that the drainage was constructed around the same time as nearby road improvements and suggested that an outlet to Fox Brook should have been installed at that time but was not.

Mr. Blaise reported that over the past three years the situation has significantly worsened, with stormwater backing up onto his property, as well as the adjacent properties owned by his neighbor (Chris) and another neighbor at 55 Blackstone Street. He described the water as encroaching beyond its intended limits and characterized the condition as a trespass of water onto private property. Photographs taken in January were submitted to illustrate the extent of flooding following a single rainstorm.

Mr. Blaise expressed concern that additional rainfall events could result in flooding of basements and damage to homes. He stated that the soil remains saturated for extended periods and that he has raised his property approximately four feet to mitigate flooding risk. He further noted that a nearby development across the street has been approved and that its engineered drainage system appears to be tied into the same drainage system affecting his backyard, which he believes will exacerbate the issue.

The Commission and Agent discussed that stormwater planning and drainage infrastructure generally fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Public Works (DPW), rather than the Conservation Commission, unless wetland resource areas are directly implicated. It was stated that DPW staff and the Town Administrator have previously visited the site, but no resolution has been reached. The Commission also acknowledged that while the matter could involve private property concerns, the drainage system in question is a municipal system.

Further discussion ensued who has permitting authority over the jurisdiction and/or implementation amongst town boards and departments over stormwater management.

Mr. Blaise indicated that he has contacted multiple town departments over the past decade without resolution and expressed concern about the upcoming wet season and the lack of timely action. He stated that he should not be required to obtain flood insurance for damage caused by a municipal drainage system.

The Commission advised Mr. Blaise to bring the matter to the Planning Board. Photographs should be shared with the Planning Board for their review. The Commission will remind DPW and appropriate town staff of the issue.

5. New/Old Business:

a. Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area Delineation: 0 Union St - Continued Public Hearing

Ms. Sam Carew of Ecosystem Solutions, who joined the meeting remotely, provided a recap of the application status. She stated that at the prior meeting the ANRAD had not yet been submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Since that time, the applicant and their representative have submitted the application to DEP and obtained a DEP file number. Ms. Carew confirmed that the required Wetlands Protection Act (WPA) forms have been reviewed and corrected, including resubmission of a deficient page and clarification of the linear footage of Bordering Vegetated Wetland (BVW) flagging.

Ms. Carew noted that a site plan had previously been requested because none was submitted with the original application. A site plan prepared by D.J. & Associates, dated December 2, 2025, has since been submitted and reviewed. The plan depicts the wetland flagging on site. Additional wetland flags were requested at the end of the delineation line to better illustrate where the wetland turns away on the property. Those additional flags have been added, and there are no issues with the revised delineation.

Ms. Carew summarized comments received from MassDEP for the record. DEP recommended that all wetland flags and boundaries be accurately located in the field and verified by the Commission, which Ecosystem Solutions has completed. DEP also noted that hay-scented fern was identified in the delineation report as FACWET, but that the most recent Army Corps of Engineers National Wetland Plant List classifies hay-scented fern as an upland species. Additionally, DEP requested clarification regarding a statement in the wetland delineation report indicating that soil evaluation was not deemed necessary.

Ms. Carew explained that although the wording in the applicant's report was unclear, the applicant did submit the required Massachusetts wetland data forms, including data plots taken in both upland and wetland areas. She stated that the confusion was related to report language rather than the actual delineation work conducted.

Based on the review, Ms. Carew stated that all peer review comments and concerns have been addressed. Ecosystem Solutions recommended that the Commission issue an Order of Resource Area Delineation (ORAD) approving the wetland boundary lines as accurate. Ms. Carew emphasized for the record that an ORAD only confirms the wetland delineation and does not approve any proposed work on the site.

A member of the public expressed concern regarding drainage impacts related to potential future development of the property, stating that drainage onto adjacent private property would be unacceptable.

The Commission clarified that the ANRAD and ORAD process only addresses wetland boundaries and that any drainage, construction, or site work would require a separate filing, such as a Notice of Intent (NOI), which would be subject to further review.

A resident raised concerns regarding past correspondence with the Town and interactions with a prior purchaser of the property. The Commission reiterated that the matter before them was limited solely to confirmation of the wetland delineation.

Motion by Mr. Andrade to approve the wetland delineation for 0 Union Street in support of the ANRAD dated August 21, 2024, and to issue an Order of Resource Area Delineation pursuant to the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (M.G.L. c. 131, §40), DEP File No. 110-0428. Seconded by Mr. Arsenault, the motion carried unanimously.

- b. Notice of Intent: 8 Spruce St - Continued Public Hearing – There was no action taken.
- c. Certificate of Compliance - Bittersweet Condos 260 Main St – No one was present. The Commission passed over.
- d. Discussion of application fees - Ms. Sara Peters, former Administrative Assistant, (joined remotely) provided a new revised fee schedule for the Commission to adopt.

She noted that the Town currently has a \$25 filing fee for Notices of Intent and no fees for other applications. She stated that most municipalities have higher and more comprehensive fee structures, including fees for additional application types and filings after violations.

She explained that implementing new fees would require a bylaw amendment, including a public hearing and a Town Meeting vote. She recommended that, if the Commission was to move forward, proposed fees be finalized and a public hearing be scheduled in March.

The Commission discussed whether fees could be adopted by policy rather than bylaw. It was noted that the current Notice of Intent fee is set by bylaw and would require amendment. Commission members expressed agreement that the existing fee structure is outdated.

The Commission discussed holding a workshop to finalize proposed fees before submitting a draft to Town Counsel.

- e. Metacomet Land Trust – Conservation Restriction

Mr. Tom Bik, Blackstone Representative for the Metacomet Land Trust, was present and updated the Commission.

The Commission discussed the status of the Metacomet Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). It was noted that the MOU has been signed by the Board of Selectmen and returned to the Commission.

The Commission reviewed the next steps required to establish the Conservation Restriction (CR). These steps include identifying the grantor and grantee of the CR. It was stated that the Town of Blackstone would serve as the landowner (grantor), and Metacomet would hold the Conservation Restriction (grantee), consistent with the intent of the Selectmen.

It was noted that the CR filing requires extensive documentation, including Town Meeting votes, certified records from the Town Clerk, a copy of the executed MOU, and preparation of a baseline documentation report. The baseline report will document existing site conditions at the time the CR is recorded.

It was emphasized that a boundary survey is a critical prerequisite to filing the CR, as the survey establishes property boundaries and corner markers. A list of qualified surveyors with experience in conservation land and CR surveys was distributed to the Commission.

Discussion ensued, as the CR involves four parcels (three of which are contiguous), aggregating the parcels could reduce survey complexity and cost by eliminating interior boundaries. It was noted that the Planning Board has authority to consolidate parcels and that such consolidation may also require coordination with the Assessor's Office for parcel designation.

Commission members agreed that pursuing parcel aggregation is reasonable and cost-effective. Coordination with the Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen to determine feasibility and process. The Commission discussed the process of selecting a surveyor. It was noted that while surveyors are specialized professionals, the Town Administrator has indicated that an RFP process may be required. The Commission agreed to review the list of recommended surveyors and forward preferred candidates to the Town Administrator for procurement.

Mr. Keefe, Chair of the Board of Selectmen was present and noted no RFP is required and concurs with the Commission's preference for a surveyor to move forward to the Selectmen.

No formal votes were taken on this item.

6. **Acceptance of Minutes** – The Chair will review prior meeting minutes and distribute to the Commission for the next scheduled meeting.
7. **Payment of Bills – Motion** by Mr. Arsenault to approve the E-Signature Invoice from the Worcester County Registry of Deeds in the amount of \$105.00. Seconded by Mr. Ensko the motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Mr. Xu to approve the invoice for Ecosystem Solutions in the amount of \$1950.00. Seconded by Mr. Arsenault, the motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Mr. Ensko to approve the MACC Annual Dues in the amount of \$300.00. Seconded by Mr. Arsenault, the motion carried unanimously.

8. **Matters that the Chairman/Vice Chairman of the Board did not reasonably anticipate 48 hours prior to the scheduled meeting.**

0 & 3 Rocco Drive – Mr. Andrade noted that the Commission received a packet of information from DEP relative to the appeal process for 0 & 3 Rocco Drive. He will review the information and forward to the Commission.

9. **Good & Welfare - Conservation Commission Members** – Mr. Arsenault requested he would like to have a town email address. The Conservation Agent opined and suggested it is essential due to FOIA i.e. public records and and/or any potential access to personal email accounts.

10. **Adjournment** – At approximately 6:41PM, **Motion** by Mr. Ensko to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Mr. Xu, the motion carried unanimously.

Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Respectfully Submitted by Tracey Ante

Conservation Commission

Jordan Andrade, Chair

Michael Catalano, Vice Chair

Eric Heistand, Clerk

Roxanne Ladoucer, Treasurer

Ed Arsenault, Member

Jingpeng Xu, Member

Zachary Ensko, Member

Dated _____