

**CITY OF NORWALK
CONSERVATION COMMISSION/INLAND
WETLAND AGENCY MINUTES
JANUARY 13, 2026**

PRESENT: Steve Klocke, Chair; Elise Allum; Paul Vinett; Devan Healy; Heather Breslin; Kathryn Knight

STAFF: Alexis Cherichetti

OTHERS: Bill Kenny; Bryan French; Ken Hughes; Chris Tramutola; Atty Liz Suchy; Doug Adams; Chris Murphy; Michelle Ford; Nicholas Parisi; Kevin Hobson; Lynnelle Jones; Diane Lauricella; Dave Lindsay; Diane Cece; Jeremiah (did not give his last name); Melissa Matuska; P. Burns; Susila Gillis; Elsa Loehmann

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Klocke called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. It should be noted that this meeting was held on Zoom.com with all participants calling in, separately.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. Cherichetti called the roll.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No one spoke on this item.

IV. RECEIPT & DISCUSSION

A. #S25-659 – Longshore Avenue – Manresa Osprey LLC – Creation of 'North Forest' park with associated trails, accessway, parking, stormwater management and landscaping in and adjacent to wetlands

Ms. Cherichetti began the presentation by asking that the commission table any discussion on this item and explained why. She also said that the applicant is required to file an application with the Planning & Zoning Commission. She recommended that the application should be done after the map amendment application which would be later in the evening. Mr. Klocke summarized Ms. Cherichetti's presentation. Atty Liz Suchy added that the petition to amend the regulations with the commission was filed in September 2025. If they had been able to move it forward, it would have been completed by this time. Their team would wait until later in the evening.

B. #S25-660 – 4 Singingwoods Road – William Kenny Associates LLC – Construction of a new single-family residence, with associated grading, stormwater management and landscaping, adjacent to wetlands and a watercourse

Ms. Cherichetti explained the application. The lot included a wetland area so a permit was required.

Bill Kenny, the soil scientist for this application, began the presentation with an introduction of the project team. He noted that the property was in the northern portion of the town and that the commission had reviewed the subdivision application within the last year. Ms. Cherichetti showed them an aerial map of the property.

Bryan French continued the presentation with a discussion of the stormwater drainage system that was being proposed. He discussed the placement of the septic and how they would maintain the buffer zones. The commission also saw the 100 ft. upland review area.

There was a discussion about the difference between this application and the previous application in 2024. Ms. Cherichetti explained the history of the lots. One lot had an application which would restore the filled wetland. On the other lots, the tax assessor had merged the lots but there was no recording on the land records.

Mr. Kenny then showed them the proposed landscape plan for this area. He showed them the boundaries and a buffer. He also discussed grading for the house and septic. There was not a full landscape plan for the property which would be determined by the builder. Ms. Cherichetti then showed them the aerial map of the property. There was a discussion about replanting vs. keeping the plants that were in the wetlands. Mr. French discussed the grading around the house which was kept close to existing conditions. He made some suggestions as to where trees could remain.

There was a discussion about a specific planting plan of the area directly around the house. They would return before the commission at their next meeting.

V. DECLARATORY RULINGS

A. 2 East Rocks Road/Crossland Property – Norwalk Recreation & Parks Department - Norwalk Urban Trails Project – Determination of non-regulated use (§60A-4) of installation of trail system within and adjacent to a wetland

Ms. Cherichetti explained what declaratory rulings were. She then oriented the commissioners as to the location of the property on an aerial map. She then showed them the design for the Urban Trails Project. She noted that the Rec and Parks Department had public information sessions. She also explained the trail system.

There was a discussion about work that seemed to be going on at the property already.

Ken Hughes, the superintendent of Parks for the city, continued the presentation by noting that the city had received grant funding. They had also completed a Master Plan of Parks. There had been a request for a trail system in Norwalk. They hired a consultant to start work on the course last year. He described the entire process up until this point in time.

There was a discussion about the floodplain and that there would be no activity that crosses the flood way.

Chris Tramutola, the landscape architect for the project, continued the presentation. He showed them a proposed plan for the site. He noted that there are people using the site now. There would be a trail with wood chips and a bridge, among other things. He showed them renderings of how the trails that were there would be cleaned up.

Mr. Hughes said that they had walked the property and did not see any trees that would be in the way of the proposed trails, thus none would have to be removed. There was a discussion about having dogs and bikes on the trail, as well as whether any trails would be accessible. There was also a discussion about elevated pathways. Mr. Hughes said that his department had requested some funding from the capital budget.

At this point, the discussion was paused to start the public hearing that would begin at 7 pm. However, Mr. Klocke made some suggestions so that they could leave the meeting and return to the meeting in 2 weeks. Both Mr. Hughes and Mr. Tramutola said that they would wait until the end of the meeting.

At this point, Ms. Cherichetti called the roll again after Mr. Klocke opened the public hearing at 7:03 pm.

VI. PUBLIC HEARINGS (BEGINS AT 7:00 P.M.)

A. #A25-069 – Longshore Avenue – Manresa Osprey LLC – Petition for Wetland Map amendment to remove previously delineated wetlands and watercourse on property

Ms. Cherichetti explained the process for the public hearing including how it was noticed. Mr. Klocke said that the comments should be limited to what is under the purview of the commission.

Atty Liz Suchy, the attorney for the applicant, said that there would be many applications for the transformation of Manresa Island into Manresa Wilds, a privately owned public park. This application was to amend the wetlands mapping, not the application for the full project. Other applications would be filed for the North Forest and the Manresa Wilds

project. She noted that they had provided the commission with additional documents after their November meeting and had notified neighbors of the hearing by certificate of mailing which had been filed with the inland/wetland agency. She introduced the project team that were present to the commission. She oriented the commissioners as to the location of the property. She then gave a brief history of the island and described the zoning.

Doug Adams, Director of Entitlements of the Manresa Island Corporation, continued the presentation by describing the first phase of the project, the North Forest which could open in spring of 2027. He shared a slide show which discussed the natural space, trails and clearing of spaces. He noted that ecological restoration would be necessary to create the North Forest.

Chris Murphy, head of design, continued the presentation by giving a history of the site which went back to 1934. He showed them the evolution of Manresa Island as well as Phase 1 and Phase 2.

It was suggested that any questions should be held into the end of the presentation since they might be answered by the presentation.

Michelle Ford, the soil scientist on the project, explained that she had been retained to delineate wetlands at the site. She noted that the wetlands could be regulated by the state or the federal government or both. She described the definitions for the wetlands, both on the state and federal level. She explained the site is mostly fill but that some has been forested and naturalized. It is mapped as having udorthents soils. In Connecticut, wetlands are soils only. She then discussed the federal wetland definition which includes soils, hydrology and vegetation indicators. She explained how she began her study by reading historical data and then what she looked at onsite. She said that the last time the site had been delineated was 2007 and a lot could change in that time. She also showed them a timeline of all the delineations on Manresa Island since 2004.

Ms. Ford then showed them the 2 areas in question on an aerial map that was being asked to be delineated. The first one she described was former W-1 and explained that there were no indicators that this was a wetland. She showed them a picture of the area which looked like a meadow. She then described the former W-2 area and again explained why she did not think it was a wetland. She showed them some pictures of this area as well.

Nicholas Parisi continued the presentation by describing the proposed ecological restoration for a resilient forest ecosystem. He explained that nonnative species would be removed. Ms. Ford did note that there were additional wetlands that she had flagged on site.

At this point, members of the public were invited to speak on this application.

Kevin Hobson, 9 Outer Road, said that he had concerns about the application. One was about the timing of the assessment. He thought that when it was done, it was an unusually dry

month. He thought observations should be done in a range of conditions. He also had concerns about the documentation that was provided for the two areas that were being declassified as W-1 and W-2. He had concerns about the wetlands losing regulatory protections. He argued that there should be an independent verification.

Lynnelle Jones, 10 Point Road, said that she had first hand knowledge of flooding in the area. She had concerns about the increase in flooding. She had concerns about weather conditions that were increasing, due to climate change. These conditions would affect Norwalk taxpayers.

Diane Lauricella, 21 Little Fox Lane, asked whether an independent review had been done of the soil scientist's findings and why it was different from the 2016 survey. She also wanted to know what were the opinions from DEEP and Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA). She also asked if W-2 would be remediated if it was declassified.

Dave Lindsay noted that there are residents who have concerns about this project. He asked that the commission follow the proper processes to protect the residents of Norwalk.

Diane Cece, 37 Olmstead Place, who said she was speaking on her own behalf, agreed with the prior speakers and had the same concerns as them.

Jeremiah (did not give his last name), 26 Sable Street, echoed the comments of the previous speakers. He urged the commissioners to be diligent. There were concerns about the infrastructure. He also believed that there were no concerns about the impacts to taxes, etc.

Melissa Matuska, 1 Longshore Avenue, asked why the areas had to be declassified.

P. Burns, 23 Sable Street, asked how high the grade would be raised. She had concerns about flooding for local neighbors.

Susila Gillis, 35 Split Rock Road, said that she had concerns about flooding in the area which seemed to be getting worse. She believed that it would be affected by eliminating the wetlands designations.

Atty Suchy said that she would have the other speakers address the technical questions from the public comments.

Elsa Loehmann began by noting that the wetlands on the 2016 survey were not actually delineated in the Wetland 1 or 2 areas. They had been delineated in 2007. There was not much information about the previous wetlands status.

Michelle Ford explained why she could not delineate the areas as wetlands. She said that boundaries no longer existed. She also addressed comments about the time of year that

the survey was done. She described some of the forms that were included. Some forms were not included because they were not wetlands. She addressed comments about a 3rd party review. She said that she had a second soil scientist with her when she went to the site. She stated she stood by her professional integrity and that it did not matter who was paying for her services.

Elsa Loehmann addressed questions that were appropriate for this application and would leave any that were appropriate for the Planning & Zoning application. She said that the team is working closely with DEEP. She also said that they were working on the design of phase 2 and no construction would be done until the design is completed. She said that there would be a stormwater management plan put in place.

Atty Suchy again noted that this was the first of many applications that would be reviewed by other commissions and agencies. It would be important to identify areas that are wetlands for the design of the North Forest.

Ms. Knight noted that the first time the commission had received this application was at their November 18 meeting and not in September. Although the application had come into the office, there had not been any commission meetings in October. There was a discussion about a third party review. Ms. Cherichetti said that there had been questions about how the delineation process worked at a previous meeting. She said that she had also provided them with a wetland delineation addendum in December. There had been some discussion about a 3rd party review but the applicant had requested a public hearing.

There was also a discussion about these former wetlands and whether they were recognized as wetlands. Ms. Cherichetti said that there had not been formally approved delineations. She would have to look up when the last time there had been a public hearing for updates. Mr. Vinett said that he had read Ms. Ford's resume and disagreed with bringing in a 3rd party.

There was a discussion about the level of disturbance to determine whether it was a wetland. Ms. Ford said that it may have been a wetland 20 years ago but she could not call it that now.

There was a discussion about the tidal wetlands and the high water mark. Ms. Ford explained the Connecticut statute definition of tidal wetlands. She explained that in the early 1900s the whole area was tidal wetlands. There was a concern that this is privately owned land so that if the land is ever sold and could be developed. There was a discussion about what was man-made on the property by the previous owners and how it affected the wetlands.

At this time, Mr. Klocke explained that they should decide whether to keep the public hearing open.

***** MR. VINETT MADE A MOTION TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING.**
***** MS. HEALY SECONDED THE MOTION.**
***** STEVE KLOCKE; ELISE ALLUM; DEVAN HEALY; PAUL VINETT; HEATHER BRESLIN; KATHRYN KNIGHT APPROVED.**
***** NO ONE OPPOSED THE MOTION.**
***** NO ONE ABSTAINED.**

Mr. Klocke said that this would be on the January 27 agenda.

VII. DISCUSSION &/OR DECISION

A. #A25-069 – Longshore Avenue – Manresa Osprey LLC – Petition for Wetland Map amendment to remove previously delineated wetlands and watercourse on property

Ms. Cherichetti noted that no one, other than commissioners, could speak on this application.

Mr. Vinett said he was very familiar with Manresa since he worked and lived near there. He explained the changes since 1985. He said that he agreed with Ms. Ford that the area should not be designated as wetlands. He said that one area was a waste site.

Ms. Breslin asked whether DEEP had defined the area as tidal wetlands. Ms. Cherichetti said that Ms. Ford's report did not designate either area as an inland or tidal wetland. Mr. Vinett said that it doesn't flood in the area. Ms. Cherichetti explained why it was not a tidal wetland. She said that she was concerned that if the land was sold it could be developed. There was a discussion as to whether Wetland 2 was made into a swamp marsh would it be delineated as a wetland. Ms. Cherichetti said it might become an inland wetland.

There was a discussion about voting on the application at this meeting.

***** MR. KLOCKE MADE A MOTION TO GRANT THE PETITION TO AMEND THE WETLANDS MAP AS REQUESTED.**
***** MR. VINETT SECONDED THE MOTION.**
***** STEVE KLOCKE; PAUL VINETT; HEATHER BRESLIN; KATHRYN KNIGHT APPROVED.**
***** DEVAN HEALY AND ELISE ALLUM ABSTAINED.**

B. 2 East Rocks Road/Crossland Property – Norwalk Recreation & Parks Department - Norwalk Urban Trails Project – Determination of non-regulated use (§60A-4) of installation of trail system within and adjacent to a wetland

The commissioners went back to this application. Ms. Cherichetti explained what the commissioners were being asked to approve. There was a discussion about what was a regulated activity, including cutting deadwood in the inland wetland. There was also a discussion as to the approach on how they reviewed the application. Ms. Cherichetti showed them the regulations for the permitted operations and uses in inland wetlands and watercourses. She also explained how her department approved some applications in their office as of right. There was a discussion about how the bridge would be built as well as a review of the plans. There was a discussion as to whether Recreation & Parks should have to go through the process of getting a permit if it was a non-regulated activity. Ms. Allum said that she believed they are professionals and know what they are doing. They would also be held accountable by the commission and others.

***** MR. KLOCKE MADE A MOTION THAT THE PROJECT QUALIFIED AS A NON-REGULATED USE AS DEFINED IN SECTION 68-4 OF THE INLAND/WETLAND REGULATIONS**

***** MS. BRESLIN SECONDED THE MOTION.**

Mr. Vinett asked Mr. Hughes to leave any deadwood, which he said would be used to line the trail.

***** STEVE KLOCKE; PAUL VINETT; HEATHER BRESLIN; KATHRYN KNIGHT; DEVAN HEALY; ELISE ALLUM APPROVED.**

***** NO ONE OPPOSED THE MOTION.**

***** NO ONE ABSTAINED.**

VIII. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. December 9, 2025 meeting minutes

***** MS. ALLUM MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 9, 2025 MEETING, AS AMENDED.**

***** MR. KLOCKE SECONDED THE MOTION.**

***** STEVE KLOCKE; ELISE ALLUM; DEVAN HEALY; PAUL VINETT; HEATHER BRESLIN; KATHRYN KNIGHT APPROVED.**

***** NO ONE OPPOSED THE MOTION.**

***** NO ONE ABSTAINED.**

IX. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Ms. Knight nominated Mr. Klocke for chair and Mr. Klocke nominated her as vice chair. Ms. Cherichetti said that there should have been an election in December.

***** MR. VINETT MADE A MOTION TO NOMINATE STEVE KLOCKE AS CHAIR AND MS. KNIGHT AS VICE CHAIR.**

***** MS. ALLUM SECONDED THE MOTION.**

***** STEVE KLOCKE; ELISE ALLUM; DEVAN HEALY; HEATHER BRESLIN; PAUL VINETT; KATHRYN KNIGHT APPROVED.**

***** NO ONE OPPOSED THE MOTION.**

***** NO ONE ABSTAINED.**

Mr. Klocke said that if anyone has an interest in being chair or vice chair, please let him know.

X. CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

Ms. Cherichetti said that she did not have any initiatives at this time.

There was a reminder about the Connecticut Association of Wetland Scientists (CAWS) meeting in early March. There was also the annual meeting of the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters on January 21, which would be held in Hartford and online. Ms. Cherichetti said she would send out the information to everyone.

There was a reminder to take the wetland training which is good through 2026. She would send a link to the commissioners.

XI. REPORTS

A. Commission Chair

There as no report from Mr. Klocke.

B. Senior Environmental Officer

There was no report from Ms. Cherichetti.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

***** MR. KLOCKE MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN.**

***** MS. KNIGHT SECONDED THE MOTION.**

***** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

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The meeting adjourned at 9:24 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero