Middlesex Conservation Commission
Tuesday, March 24, 2026
Meeting Conducted Via Zoom

Minutes

Commissioners Present: Katy Farber, Kimberly Hagen, Ross Lieblappen, Adrienne Magida, Dave Shepard, and Jon Udis
Guests: Sandy Levine – Middlesex Planning Commission, Dan Riley, and Sam Wooster

1. Administrative Operations

a. Minutes of February 24, 2026, Meeting
Kimberly made a motion to approve the February 24th meeting minutes of the Middlesex Conservation Commission (MCC) with a second from Katy. Kimberly recalled a typo in the minutes but didn't have the exact reference, she will email Dave with any correction. With this caveat, the minutes were approved.

b. Finance Report
Ross reported there were no updates to the finances.

c. Town Forest Cabin Update
Adrienne reported that Vermont Huts & Trails (VHT), who could manage the reservations for the cabin, have property insurance that would cover the cabin. Sandy noted that towns have sovereign immunity. VHT has not had any vandalism at any of their huts in their 10 years of existence. Adrienne contacted the Bradford Conservation Commission who also reported they have not had any vandalism of their cabin. VHT allows partner hut operators to set their own fees and there is a one-time $200 set-up fee. Adrienne pointed out that parking for overnight use might be an issue. Ross suggested the rental season be limited to the non-winter seasons, at least initially. With the repair estimate previously provided by Sam Wooster at $40,000 to $50,000 for a contractor to do the work, Dave asked if volunteer labor could reduce the price tag. Sam thought the use of volunteers could likely knock several thousand dollars off the cost. Adrienne said she had checked with Select Board chair Liz Scharf about whether a project of this magnitude would need to go out to bid and Liz said it would. Katy said the MCC would need to define the purpose served by repairing the cabin. There isn't a current estimate of the cost of demolishing the cabin, but it would likely not be insubstantial given the accessibility of the site for transporting the waste materials. There is a question of how much interest in the cabin their may be among town residents; Sandy suggested a short survey on Front Porch Forum to try to assess this. Kimberly and Ross both spoke of the potential benefit to the town of the cabin. Adrienne will check in with the Select Board and the MCC will potentially follow that up with a survey.

d. Mad River Path
There was a recent meeting with the Vermont Agency of Transportation and the legislative representatives from the Mad River Valley towns. An issue raised was whether there might be flexibility in standards that might expedite progress with the path. Planning is proceeding with fundraising for the Kingsbury Greenway.

e. South Bear Swamp Road Upgrade
The MCC reviewed draft comments on the proposed upgrade of South Bear Swamp Road prepared by the Trail Subcommittee. Jon supported advocating for an updated Class 4 Road policy that would address criteria for evaluating proposed changes in classification. Ross asked if the MCC should contact the Select Board to ask about any role they might want the MCC to play. Dan inquired about how Act 181might relate to the potential road upgrade. Adrienne said the MCC isn't taking a pro or con position regarding this specific request but rather supporting a more defined policy for considering changes in road classification. Dan spoke of the value of the wild quality of the area traversed by the Class 4 section of the road. Kimberly offered to investigate Act 181 and any implications there might be. Ross pointed out the importance of this area as a wildlife corridor connecting to the Shutesville Hill Wildlife Corridor. Ross and Dave will work on draft comments from the MCC to the Select Board. Katy said a Class 4 road policy should consider conservation values wherever a road is located. The intent is to get the comments to the Select Board in advance of their upcoming hearing in April. Adrienne will schedule a special meeting of the MCC to review and approve comments.

2. Project Reports (point person shown in parentheses)

a. Trails Committee (Adrienne, Dave and/or Jon)
Adrienne reported that Al Boright attended the most recent meeting to talk about a potential trail on the east side of Wrightsville Reservoir. He also was interested in winter use of the Shady Rill Park for dog walking and asked if it would be possible to plow an area large enough for a couple of cars to park. Adrienne contacted Road Foreman Eric Metevier about the plowing, and he was supportive and has already done the plowing.

Minutes of Trails Committee meetings can be found at the What's Next Middlesex website: http://www.whatsnextmiddlesex.org/meeting-minutes.html.

b. Wrightsville Beach Recreation Area and Shady Rill Park (Aric Brown)
Jane Dudley has been rehired for another year as manager. Ben Green is the new contact at the Department of Environmental Conservation for Shady Rill Park.

c. Green Up Day
Jon reported that the trash dumpster from Casella will cost about $600. The cost for tire disposal is $8 per tire and $16 for a tire and rim. He talked with Town Clerk Bridgid Browning about the cost for tire disposal and she recommended reaching out to the Middlesex Community Fund. He sent them an email requesting $1400 and is awaiting a reply. Time slots for staffing the drop-off site on Green Up Day on May 2nd will be as follows: Jon at 8:00 a.m., Larry at 9:00, Adrienne at 10:00, Kimberly at 11:00, Dave at 12:00 and Ross at 1:00 p.m. Adrienne will check with Sage Romey about covering the 2:00 slot.

3. Other Business

a. Chases Mountain Trail
Dave will check with Bryan Redmond about posting the mud season trail closure sign and will look into also putting a rope across the trail. Dave asked if MCC members were comfortable with him deciding when to close the trail and got the approval to do so.

b. Culvert Monitoring Project
The road committee has too much on their plate and would like the MCC to oversee the culvert monitoring project.

Next Meeting: April 28, 2026

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard, MCC Secretary

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