

NORTH RIVER COMMISSION

Minutes of Meeting #623 - July 23, 2026

Location: Room 133A, Norwell Town Offices, 93 Longwater Circle, Norwell, MA 02061

Time Called to Order: 7:00 P.M.

Present: Boulter (Pembroke), Heine (Hanson), Jones (Hanover), Lawrence (Hanover - A), Leonard (Marshfield), Cyrus (Marshfield – A), Lynch (Norwell), Gallagher (Scituate)

Absent: Kemmett (Hanson – A), Simpson (Norwell – A), Lalone (Scituate – A)

I. Approval of Minutes — June 25, 2026

A member noted a correction to the Minutes of June 25, 2026: in Item II (Request for Determination — 0 River Road, Hanover), the cross-reference to the floating dock bylaw discussion — listed as “Section VIII, below” — should instead read “Section VI,” the section in which the bylaw’s adoption was actually addressed.

Action: Motion to approve the Minutes of June 25, 2026, as corrected. (Leonard/Gallagher)
Vote: 6-0.

II. Administrator’s Report

The Administrator reported that letters of approval had been sent to the applicants for the three projects approved at last month’s meetings. He also reported that the Special Permit for 78 Stony Brook Lane, Norwell had been recorded at the Registry of Deeds.

Floating Dock Bylaw Update

The Administrator reported that the special permit for 78 Stony Brook Lane was recorded at the Registry of Deeds. The recording information, together with the Commission’s newly adopted floating dock (“float”) bylaw, was forwarded to the Commission’s attorney contact at the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) for review. The attorney’s initial review found nothing in the bylaw requiring DCR approval; however, she is elevating the matter to her supervising attorney for further review, with more information to follow. The Administrator will continue to monitor the matter through DCR counsel’s office.

Unpermitted Fence - Follow-Up

The Administrator reported that the property owner regarding the unpermitted fence discussed at the June 25, 2026 meeting (see Minutes of June 25, 2026, Item VII) had been in contact with the Administrator’s office. The owner was unable to attend tonight’s meeting but is expected to appear on the agenda for the August meeting. The information was also forwarded to the local Conservation Commission.

Digitized Records - Property Sale

The Administrator shared that a property in Scituate was sold this month, and related an anecdote illustrating the value of the Commission’s digitized recordkeeping: an owner handling her late parents’ estate needed documentation to resolve outstanding issues with her town’s Conservation

Commission prior to sale. The Administrator was able to provide the requested files completely and promptly, which allowed the outstanding issues to be cleared up.

III. New Business

78 Stony Brook Lane, Norwell — Certificate of Compliance Request (2019 Special Permit)

The Administrator requested that the Commission issue a certificate of compliance for a 2019 special permit at 78 Stony Brook Lane, held by the prior owners, so that the current owners may proceed with a clear title. The Administrator explained that the 2019 permit authorized removal of an existing shed and construction of a new garage set farther back from the riverbank; the as-built plan shows the garage was constructed smaller and farther from the river than the approved plan required, and an engineer certified that the as-built condition is compliant. The Administrator noted that the Conservation Commission separately issued a certificate of compliance in 2022 for the project.

Action: Motion to issue a certificate of compliance for the 2019 special permit at 78 Stony Brook Lane. (Gallagher/Heine) Vote: 6-0

IV. General/Old Business — Open Discussion

Off Schedule Meetings

The Commission continued a discussion begun at a prior meeting regarding criteria for scheduling meetings outside the Commission's regular monthly cycle (see Minutes of June 25, 2026, Item VIII).

Members discussed at length the appropriate criteria for authorizing an off-schedule ("exceptional basis") meeting, including: the distinction between "hardship" and "practical difficulty" as used in recently revised state law governing zoning variances, and whether that standard should inform the Commission's own criteria; whether financial hardship should qualify, and if so, subject to what limitations; the administrative burden of assembling a quorum on short notice; and whether video-conference ("Zoom") meetings should be used for such circumstances, including their approximate cost (reported at roughly \$15 per month). Members noted that a special permit hearing requires public notice by newspaper publication regardless of scheduling, while a Request for Determination hearing carries no such notice requirement. Several members expressed concern that overly permissive criteria could create pressure to grant exceptions broadly and set difficult precedent, while others emphasized the Commission's interest in accommodating applicants facing genuine time-sensitive circumstances. No consensus was reached.

Action: Motion to table the discussion of off-schedule meeting criteria for further consideration at a future meeting. (Lynch/Lawrence) — Vote: 6-0

Review of Payroll C.O.L.A.

A member noted that the Administrator's salary had not been increased in three years, during which the applicable state cost-of-living rate increased 3.4% (FY2024), 3.3% (FY2025), and 3.2% (FY2026), for a cumulative total of approximately 9.9%.

Action: Motion to increase the Administrator's salary by 10%, effective with the next pay period, and to direct that the Commission consider an annual cost-of-living adjustment to the Administrator's salary each year thereafter, based on the applicable rate published by the Department of Labor for that year. (Lynch/Heine) — Vote: 6-0

V. Adjournment

Action: Motion to adjourn the meeting. (Lynch/Jones) — Vote: 6-0

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 P.M.

Minutes prepared by: Gary Wolcott, Administrator