

NORTH RIVER COMMISSION

Minutes of Meeting #622

June 25, 2026

Location: Meeting Room 133A, Town Offices, 93 Longwater Circle, Norwell, Massachusetts

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

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

Absent: Jones (Hanover), Cyrus (Marshfield – A), Kemmett (Hanson – A),

I. Public Hearing: Special Permit Amendment — 16 River Road, Hanover (Lipowski)

The application seeks to amend an existing special permit for additions to a single-family dwelling to add landscaping details.

Bart Lipinski, landscape architect with Grady Consulting, LLC, presented the plan on behalf of the applicants. Mr. Lipinski summarized the following elements of the proposal:

- Removal of approximately 2,100 square feet of existing lawn within the riverfront buffer, to be replanted with a native conservation seed mix and native plantings; a separate planting list applies to areas outside the buffer.
- Repair of existing stone retaining walls (ranging from approximately 1 to 2 feet in height) without change to their existing height or length, except at one corner near the water access steps, where a short wall (approximately 18 inches to 2 feet) will be extended to create a safe landing area.
- Removal of invasive vegetation throughout the property, including ivy, dewberry, Virginia creeper, and bittersweet.
- Replacement of two existing sets of deteriorated stone steps with granite steps, dry-laid on crushed stone with no new concrete or mortar.
- Installation of new lawn (New England warm-season mix) to create a continuous lawn area from the house to the river.
- Installation of a seasonal floating dock off the southwest corner of the property (approximately 12 feet by 14 feet), secured by pilings, with a gangway approximately 10 feet in length. The applicant noted that the plan set contains a typographical error listing the gangway at 20 feet and asked that the note be corrected to reflect the 10-foot dimension. The dock is proposed to be removed seasonally and stored on grade beneath existing hemlock trees; no permanent pad or fill is proposed for the storage area.
- Removal or pruning of two trees identified in the field — a hickory (previously misidentified on the submitted plan as a maple) heavily overtaken by bittersweet, and a hemlock on the right side of the property with little remaining canopy after invasive vine removal — subject to further evaluation by a horticulturalist.

- Installation of a fence (approximately 4 feet high, atop the existing 1- to 2-foot retaining walls) to enclose a limited yard area for the homeowners' dog.

In response to Commission questions, Mr. Lipinski confirmed that the repaired walls will not increase in height or length except as noted above; that the dock will rest on floating PVC pontoons, with a small concrete slab (4 to 6 inches deep, at grade) anchoring the gangway's landward end; that existing vegetation effectively screens gangway and float storage; and that the river in this location is approximately 80 to 90 feet wide.

No abutters or members of the public spoke to the Application.

Action: Motion to approve the Special Permit amendment as submitted. (Lynch/Gallagher) – Vote 6-0.

II. Request for Determination - 0 River Road, Hanover - Assessor's Map 66, Lot 119 (Torres)

Denise Torres, applicant/owner and Butch Wilson of Trufant Real Estate appeared before the Commission. Ms. Torres explained that the parcel — a narrow strip of land on the south side of River Road providing river access, separate from the dwelling on the north side of the road — is improved with an existing floating dock (approximately 8 feet by 20 feet), installed roughly seven years ago on removable pilings, replacing an older dock that had been in place for approximately 20 years. Ms. Torres is in the process of selling the property, and the buyer's attorney has requested written confirmation from the Commission that the existing dock is a lawful, allowed use before closing.

Commission members noted that the dock's dimensions (160 square feet) fall within the parameters contemplated by the floating dock bylaw the Commission has been developing (see Section VI, below), although that bylaw had not yet been adopted at the time of this determination.

Action: Motion to determine that the existing floating dock at 0 River Road, Hanover (Assessor's Map 66, Lot 119) is an allowed use. (Lynch/Leonard) – Vote 6-0.

III. Request for Determination of Applicability — 55 Macomers Way (Popolski)

Property owners Martha and Christopher Popolski appeared before the Commission regarding repair and reconstruction of two existing decks. The owners explained that both decks require new decking and railings; the supporting framing and footings are sound and will not be replaced. The project also proposes to connect the two decks with a new corner section (approximately 6 feet wide), which would eliminate the current need to walk through the interior of the house to reach one deck from the other. The owners stated that they had discussed the project informally with the building department and with a conservation agent, who indicated that using helical ("diamond pier") footings — which require no excavation beyond removal of topsoil — would not require a Conservation Commission filing. The owners indicated a preference for mahogany decking over composite decking for comfort in direct sun, and described a railing system with a top and bottom 2-by-6 rail and more closely spaced spindles

than the existing railing. The deck footprint will remain parallel to its existing alignment and will not extend farther toward the river.

Action: Motion to determine that the project as submitted is an Allowed Use.
(Leonard/Gallagher) – Vote 6-0.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of May 14, 2026

A member noted a correction to the minutes of the May 14, 2026 meeting: under General-Old Business, in the discussion regarding removal of upland requirements, a typographical error ("winter ring") should be corrected to read "winter storage."

Action: Motion to approve amended May 14, 2026 Minutes, with the noted revision.
(Leonard/Lynch) – Vote 6-0.

Minutes of May 28, 2026

Action: Motion to approve May 28, 2026 Minutes. (Leonard/Gallagher) – Vote 6-0.

V. Administrators Report

The Administrator reported that the applicants at 78 Stony Brook Lane, whose special permit had been conditionally approved subject to submission of plans demonstrating that the proposed structure would remain within the previously approved building envelope, submitted the required massing calculations and height profile earlier in the week. The Administrator confirmed the submitted plans comply with the approved envelope and reported the special permit was ready for signature.

78 Stony Brook Lane — Requested Extension of Completion Period

The Administrator reported that the applicant's attorney requested that the standard one-year completion condition in the special permit be extended to two years, to be consistent with the two-year completion period imposed by other approving authorities in their respective approvals for the same project. Members discussed that construction timelines generally have lengthened in recent years due to contractor scheduling, supply chain conditions, and project scale, and that a two-year completion period would not create a material downside for the Commission or the public.

Action: Motion to edit the Special Permit to allow a two-year project completion date, effective June 25, 2026. (Lynch/Leonard) – Vote 6-0.

VI. Bylaw Amendment — Adoption of Floating Dock ("Float") Bylaw

The Float By-Law Committee chair asked the Commission to adopt the floating dock bylaw language as most recently agreed upon through the Commission's multi-meeting drafting process, to be added as Amendment 14 to the North River Commission's bylaws (the table of contents previously included in draft versions to be omitted from the final bylaw text), and to direct the Administrator to work with the Department of Conservation and Recreation and/or the

Secretary of the Commonwealth to ensure the amendment is properly filed and recorded with the appropriate state authority.

A member noted that all six member towns of the North River watershed had reviewed and provided input on the bylaw language during its development, and that feedback from the towns had been positive.

Action: Motion to adopt the floating dock bylaw as Amendment 14 to the North River Commission bylaws, and to direct the Administrator to work with DCR and/or the Secretary of the Commonwealth to properly file and record the amendment. (Lynch/Boulter) – Vote 6-0.

VII. General/Old Business - Unpermitted Fence Within the Riverfront Buffer

A member raised a report from a neighboring property owner regarding a six-foot solid fence recently installed within 100 feet of the river at a corridor address, apparently without the property owner having first come before the Commission for approval. Members discussed the Commission's longstanding, informal policy distinguishing between solid or opaque fencing running parallel to the river (historically disfavored) and open or substantially see-through fencing such as chain-link or split-rail (historically permitted), and agreed that clearer, more consistent written guidance is needed.

Members agreed that the Administrator should send correspondence to the property owner regarding the fence and invite them to appear before the Commission, and separately discussed improving communication with local Conservation Commissions regarding activity within the riverfront buffer, so that the Commission is made aware of similar situations going forward.

Action: Motion to direct the Administrator to send a letter to the property owner regarding the unpermitted fence and invite the owner to appear before the Commission, and to encourage improved information-sharing with local Conservation Commissions on activity within the buffer. (Leonard/Lynch) – Vote 6-0.

Members agreed this topic — developing clearer, less subjective standards for evaluating fences and similar structures within the corridor — warrants further discussion at a future meeting and did not take further action at this time.

VIII. General/Old Business - Site Visit Protocol and Hardship Policy

Members continued a discussion, begun at a prior meeting, regarding a recent situation in which work began at a property before the Commission had reached a decision, and the individual member who conducted the site visit felt pressure to render an informal decision alone. Members agreed that site visits should not place the burden of decision-making on a single member, and discussed formalizing a protocol going forward.

Members also discussed developing a more formal policy defining what constitutes "hardship" sufficient to warrant a special meeting outside of the Commission's regular monthly cycle, noting that other boards (e.g., zoning boards of appeal) apply defined hardship criteria (financial, physical, safety-related, etc.). Several members expressed interest in serving on a small working group to draft proposed hardship criteria and suggested website language inviting residents

facing time-sensitive circumstances to contact the Administrator's office, for the Commission's consideration at a future meeting.

Action: Motion to direct the Administrator to prepare draft language for the Commission's website inviting residents to contact the office in circumstances of potential hardship, for the Commission's consideration at the next meeting. (Lynch/Boulter) – Vote 6-0

IX. Adjournment

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

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:35 P.M.

Minutes prepared by: Gary Wolcott, Administrator