

WEST TISBURY
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
August 18, 2026

Present: Whit Griswold, Ernie Thomas, Noah Froh, Chris Lyons, Robert Myhill (zoom)

Absent: Peter Rodegast

Staff Present: Angela Luckey

Also **present for all or part of the meeting:** Everett Jones, Mal Jones, Caitlyn Jones, Tim Brooks(zoom)

Call to Order: Ernie called the meeting to order at 5:07 pm

Approve Minutes – Minutes for Tuesday, August 4, 2026

Ernie made a motion to approve the minutes as amended, seconded by Chris

Roll call vote: Noah-aye, Chris-aye, Ernie-aye, Whit-aye, Robert-aye

Continued Hearings:

Whit opened the continued hearing at 5:11 pm

Noah recused himself and stepped away from the room.

5:10 PM/ of Map 6 Lot 2.1/SE79-495: a public meeting under the requirements of G.L. Ch.131 § 40, as amended, and the West Tisbury Wetlands Protection Bylaw and regulations to consider a **Notice of Intent** filed by Vineyard Land Surveying & Engineering, Inc., on behalf of The Songwind Nominee Trust for a project located at **143 Obed Daggett Road** to permit after-the-fact installation of below ground utilities within the buffer zone to a bordering vegetated wetland.

Reid joined the table to present the project.

- Property has an intermittent stream and a large wetland in the back.
- Existing dirt road is not a road that is regularly travelled.
- There is a hand hole in the woods that serves power for everything. The applicant dug a trench for electric for the camper van that is parked there. The trenching was likely done in the spring.
- The Building Inspector brought it to the applicant's attention that they are within the wetlands/buffer zone and that they needed to file with the Conservation Commission.
- The camper van is for the caretaker to live in when they are on island.
- Edge of clearing is near the edge of the Conservation Restriction held by Sheriff's Meadow. Kristen attended the site visit and from that visit said it was likely that the work was outside of the Conservation Restriction.

Aerial images and site visit images were viewed on the screen.

- Aerial images from 2024 show empty space with no storage materials or camper van. In 2025, the start of storage materials was present. Then in 2026 the camper van, storage tanks, and building debris are visible.
- Site visit images show the extent of materials within the buffer zone. A bucket of potential sewage water under the sewage outlet in the camper van was observed as well. The camper van was hooked up to well water via a hose and was running on a generator for electricity.
- During the site visit an excavator was also observed parked right next to the intermittent stream. It looked like the excavator had been used to pull boulders out from the side of the hill.

Commissioner's comments and questions:

- Excessive amount of materials within the buffer zone. The board would like all of this removed and relocated to outside of the 100-foot buffer
- Concerns around waste disposal based on the bucket of questionable water.

- Questions around the purpose of the camper and the storage tanks, and whether the well was previously permitted being so close to the wetland.
- Problem of continued unsanctioned work at this property.
- Discussion that if this NOI were approved that there would be conditions to remove the storage container, camper, and materials outside the 100-foot buffer by 30 days after the end of the appeal period.
 - Would like assurances that any services are properly permitted through all town departments involved.
 - Condition of follow up site visits to monitor the situation.
 - Cease and desist any activity with the excavator near the intermittent stream and within Conservation Commission jurisdiction.
- A commissioner expressed a desire for the property owner to come in and talk to the board to educate them and ascertain why they have disregarded the board's purview. Reid was asked to deliver this message to the property owner.

Tim Brooks, an abutter, spoke up stating that he appreciated the comments from the commission and their concern for the impact of these actions.

- Concerns around the well and whether it was permitted, and if it should be capped.
- Noting that this is a sensitive area and work needs to stop in those areas.
- Suggestion of native plant restoration for the area that had been disturbed in order to restore the buffer zone.

Board continued the hearing to get more answers. Reid was asked to get information on the history of the well and to draft a new plan for where the camper van and materials would be relocated and the proposed utility access.

Ernie made a motion to continue the public hearing to September 15, 2026, at 5:10 pm, seconded by Chris. Roll call vote: Robert-aye, Chris-aye, Whit-aye, Ernie-aye

Board would like Angela to draft and send a letter as a stop work order for the excavator work near the intermittent stream.

Whit opened the continued public hearing at 5:47 pm

Noah recused himself once again and stepped out of the room

5:40 PM/ of Map 13 Lot 11: a public meeting under the requirements of G.L. Ch.131 § 40, as amended, and the West Tisbury Wetlands Protection Bylaw and regulations to consider a **Notice of Intent** filed by Vineyard Land Surveying & Engineering, Inc., on behalf of Alexander Pyle for a project located at **14 Ephriam Allen Road** to trim and top selected trees, maintaining a view channel to serve an existing dwelling. A portion of the work is within the buffer zone to a bordering vegetated wetland.

Reid went into the wetland area to determine the extent of proposed pruning – species and number of trees.

- Predominantly oaks and mature beetlebungs, one large maple tree is in the wetland. Proposing the 'topping' of oaks, but not sure how you could 'top' the beetlebung since the growth goes straight up whereas oak trees have more linear branching that can be pruned.
- Proposing to cut about 6 feet of canopy height.

Images shared previously by the applicant were once again reviewed by the board. Image from the deck was likely taken in the early 2000s, from the picture you are able to see a view of the Vineyard Sound.

Sheriff's Meadow has a view easement in this area. When Reid's office reached out to them they said they were not interested in doing the work but that they would comment once the Conservation Commission issued a determination.

Boards comments and questions:

- Resistance to seeing the crowns cut to such a great extent and work within the Bordering Vegetated Wetland (BVW), as it is the board's impression that there shall be no alteration within the BVW.
- Would like a clear showing that this activity would not do any harm to the resource.
- Uncertainty around the relevance of previous view channel. Does explain the reason for their request.
- Hard to believe that this action would not have some sort of impact on the area itself.

Public comment: By cutting the crown you are now opening the tree to rotting. Cutting would also promote more limb growth and a need for continuous cutting to maintain desired effect.

Reid's follow-up remarks:

- The line continues to move for view clearing and what work would be approved.
- The related interests in the Wetlands Protection act are erosion, habitat, and ground water quality. The question being what the impact on the wetlands is and in his opinion there would not be a measurable impact here.
- Proposing 6 feet of removal of canopy which he believes would not kill the tree

Commission response that they would rather be more cautious and take each case individually as factors differ, it would be different if this were an application to thin rather than top trees.

- Idea of a phased approach was floated but other commissioners were still not comfortable with approving the canopy cutting.

Reid asked for a continuation and a clear statement of what the Commission's concerns are so he might address that.

- Commission would like comments from a certified arborist on how the work would be done and whether there would be damage to the tree and resource area. Requesting more scientific evidence that backs up the assumption of the proposed work causing minimal damage.

Ernie made a motion to continue the public hearing to September 15, 2026 at 5:40 pm, seconded by Chris.

Roll call vote: Robert-aye, Chris-aye, Whit-aye, Ernie-aye

New Business:

Bryan McCormack third party review of Thumb Point Cove

- Everett Jones shared a letter with the board in response to Bryan McCormack's report.
 - Specifically questioning the nourishment figures as sand is being added to the system and visually it appears that the sediment has doubled. If you maintain a certain profile of land, do you increase the rate of erosion? Also, unsure of the comments about the transport of the sediment, in the report it is attributed to changes in a flood dominant regime.
- The Sea Grant Report was based on lidar imagery, findings were that the nourishment did not exceed natural erosion estimates.
- Public concerns raised were both the impacts on shellfish beds and the filling of Thumb Point Cove.

Board Comments:

- Suggestion of forwarding Everett's questions to Bryan and inviting him to attend a future meeting to be available for questions and further discussion.
- Board would like to determine if this previously approved work is having negative impacts on the abutting properties.
- Considering previous discussions with George Sourati and that there is no evidence to confirm that the nourishment is directly contributing to the shoaling. This is a complicated system that requires further expert review to inform possible approaches to address the issue.

Next steps: Invite Bryan to attend an upcoming meeting and answer Everett's questions prior to the meeting. Additionally, locate the specific condition in the Order of Conditions that asserts the Conservation Commission's right to revisit the approved work if there are impacts on the surrounding environment.

- Angela had notified Sourati's office about this discussion being on the agenda for this meeting. She will email him with an update once there is confirmation from Bryan that he can attend an upcoming meeting.

Time will be reserved for topics that the Chair did not reasonably anticipate.

- Church outreach – The church next to the Town Hall is exploring the idea of informative potlucks.
 - Opportunity for an informal presentation about the Conservation Commission.
 - Tentative date of October 27th, Robert and Angela will have more details to share at the September 15th meeting.

Calendar:

No Meeting September 1 – Election Day

Next Meeting – September 15, 2026

Schedule next site visit – September 14, 2026

- Site visit to monitor sandplain grassland restoration. Board agreed on a site visit for September 14 at 2 pm. Confirmed that Carlos shall be present at that meeting to provide an update and answer questions.

Administrative:

Coastal Resilience Zone Regulations Working Group participation

- Noah and Robert have volunteered to be on the working group. The group will meet once a month with a clear directive, Angela will facilitate. Sue or Nicola from the Energy/Climate Advisory Committee will also be joining. In the future, a Planning Board member can be invited to join. Shannon Hulst from the Sea Grant is willing to meet with the group to help develop a clear action plan.

Correspondence:

Notification from Building Department on 25 Walter Hillman Road unpermitted house expansion.

- Building Inspector is going to contact property owner. Conservation Commission will stand by until there is an update from him.

Draft plan from Vineyard Land Surveying to combine work at 201 Thumb Point

- Transformer pad and electric line were changed because building department wanted it to be relocated out of the flood zone.
- Now there is new disturbance proposed outside of what was previously approved.
- Commission asked why they could not go up the driveway instead of disturbing a fresh area. Reid agreed that was a better option.
- Commission reiterated that proposed propane tanks on plan shall be above ground as the special conditions state no underground propane tanks.
- Reid will go back to contractors about propane tanks needing to be above ground and running the electric line down the driveway to avoid new disturbance and additional filing.

Chris made a motion to adjourn at 7:03 pm, seconded by Noah

Roll call vote: Noah-aye, Ernie-aye, Chris-aye, Robert-aye, Whit-aye

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Luckey – Board Administrator

APPROVED – Tuesday, September 15, 2026