WEST TISBURY
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
October 6, 2026

Present: Whit Griswold, Ernie Thomas, Chris Lyons, Robert Myhill, Peter Rodegast, Noah Froh
Absent: N/A
Staff Present: Angela Luckey
Also **present for all or part of the meeting**: Edmund Cottle Jr, Jeremy Houser, Robert McCarron, Reid Silva, Phil Hale, Lesley Eaton, Lauren Lynch

Call to Order: Whit called the meeting to order at 5:04 pm
Approve Minutes – Minutes for Tuesday, September 15, 2026
Peter made a motion to approve the minutes as amended, seconded by Ernie.
Roll call vote: Noah-aye, Ernie-aye, Chris-aye, Peter-aye, Robert-aye, Whit-aye

New Public Hearing:
Whit opened the public hearing at 5:14 pm
5:10 PM/ of Map 7 Lot 27.1: 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 Edmund C. Cottle for a project located at **274 Lamberts Cove Road** to permit after-the-fact trenching and installation of a replacement electric service line within the buffer zone to a vegetated wetland and the riverfront area.

Reid joined the table with a site plan to discuss the project.

- At the last meeting the Board required an after-the-fact Notice of Intent (NOI) to bring the completed work into compliance.
- Plan reflects the electrical trenching that was done. Trenching has been filled, which was observed at the most recent site visit. Conduit is currently in place without electrical wiring. Upon approval, wiring can be pulled through the conduit without additional disturbance.
- Reid noted that this trenching is the most direct route and would have been his proposed route even if the work had not been done yet.

Commissioner's comments and questions:

- Trenching for another cable line had been done to the existing garage and there was a question of whether that could be used instead.
- Disturbance was done in an old pasture rather than a wooded lot or previously undisturbed area.
- Board might have asked the applicant to go along the road. Reid said that would have required a lot more directional drilling.

Peter made a motion to approve the after-the-fact NOI with two statements inserted into the Findings of the Order of Conditions:

- Reiteration that any work done within the Riverfront area and the buffer to the wetlands requires a permit from the Conservation Commission.
- Approval of the proposed mill stone location, as reflected on the site plan. Permitting a 4-foot by 5-foot concrete pad covered with mulch and a wooden arch placed on top of the mill stone.

Ernie seconded the motion.
Roll call vote: Chris-aye, Peter-aye, Robert-aye, Ernie- Aye, Noah-aye, Whit -aye

New Business:
Caitlin Jones Letter of Interest to serve on the Conservation Commission – **Postponed to next meeting**

APR Discussion for Deer Processing Facility at the Ag Hall

- Present representatives: Rob McCarron – Board Chair and Co-Chair of Building Committee for Deer Processing Facility, Phil Hale – Co-chair of Building Committee for Deer Processing Facility and on Tick Free MV Board, Lauren Lynch – Executive Director of Ag Society. Jeremy Houser was present from Vineyard Conservation Society (VCS).
- The Planning Board's decision conditioned that the Ag Society consult with the Conservation Commission as the access road to this facility goes through the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) held by VCS and the Conservation Commission.
- Mr. McCarron presented a small site plan to show proposed location of deer coolers and processing trailers near the existing solar array. The Board viewed aerial maps on the shared screen.
- Trailers will be used for processing deer donated through the Share the Harvest Program, processed by local butchers that are paid by the state. Venison will be donated to the local food pantry (last year 3000 pounds of venison were donated to the food pantry).
- Tick Free MV is providing a stipend of $100 for a buck and $150 for a doe to hunters for deer donated to the food pantry.
- Only donated deer will be going through this facility, the caveat being that non-donation deer can be hung in the existing deer coolers. These are currently viewed as separate operations.
- Phase 1 consists of 2 butchering trailers, a separate cooler trailer, and an office trailer with standup freezers. The 4 trailers were paid for by Tick Free MV and private donations and have been delivered to the Ag Society. Operations are anticipated to begin by November 1st.
    - Island Grown Initiative (IGI) and the MV Hunt Club are the two state designated processing facilities on the island. MV Hunt Club is ceasing operations. IGI is willing to take on processing until the Ag Society trailers are operational.
    - Each deer will be tagged and numbered to ensure donated deer and non-donated deer are kept separate.
- Question around disposal of parts not used and whether the Wampanoag tribe has been contacted to see if they are interested in any parts of the deer.
    - Lauren said IGI has been in touch with tribes off island and have communicated with the local Wampanoag tribe in Aquinnah. Meat is being donated to the Aquinnah tribe. Off island tribes have expressed more interest in the deer hides.
    - Unused parts will be hauled away by Bruno's, and a composting option is being explored.
- APR Discussion:
    - Mr. McCarron does not think they need approval under the APR, however, they do need to go through the APR to access the non-APR land. Citing Page 3 Item B.(1) of the APR, he believes this clause is broad enough to permit use of the road for processing animals.
        - *The use of the Property, and the construction or placing of buildings or structures, for non-profit and non-profit educational purposes only, and for non-profit agricultural purposes and such limited commercial agricultural purposes as may be directly related to the permitted non-profit and non-profit educational uses of the Property.*
    - Phase 2 will include cold storage and a processing facility. It is agriculturally related and the cold storage will be used to store agricultural meats and vegetable crops. Mr. McCarron notes the agricultural impact of deer on crops and considers the processing of the meat itself to be an agricultural and non-profit purpose since all deer meat will be donated.
    - The approval entity of the APR is VCS, whereas the Conservation Commission serves as an advisor under the APR.
    - Mr. Houser from VCS made some additional comments regarding the APR:
        - Their view as co-holders is really that approval is both VCS and the Town of West Tisbury and they would like to share that authority with the town.

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        - Overall, they are supportive and believe this approach supports the broader ecology, as opposed to the alternative of broadcast spraying for ticks.
        - Almost entirely agree with Rob's interpretation of the APR language but would rather not broach the question of whether this activity fits the spirit of the APR because the activity is not taking place on the APR. The road access is the concern and trying not to increase intensity of use.
        - They were not aware of the disposal plans and would like to see Bruno's trips minimized as much as possible.
- Time of year usage:
    - Deer hunting season runs from September 21 until the middle of February, and the facility will be the most active during this time.
    - Deer damage permits issued by the state are available outside of deer hunting season and permits hunting with baiting stations 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. The processing facility would be turned on as needed for deer damage permits outside of general hunting season.
- Intensity of usage concerns: This has potential to add a lot of intensity of usage to APR lands by using it for access. In previous years this concern has been vocalized by the Select Board. There is also another way to access that property without having to go on APR land, but this would require clearing trees and creating a new road.
    - Planning Board was specific in wanting to keep the one-way road to be mindful of adjacent houses so altering the traffic flow is not an option.
    - There are 8 parking spaces in total, and they do not think operations would impact events like the farmer's market.
- Additional questions regarding APR – Section A Part 4 regarding no commercial or industrial operations.
    - *No commercial or industrial uses of the Property may be permitted, except as specifically set forth in Paragraph B.*
    - Are these operations commercial or industrial? Does this paragraph disallow this? Mr. McCarron says this would fall closer to commercial agricultural which is exempt in paragraph B. Although they are more non-profit because the deer is donated.
- Phase 2: Phase 1 offers a chance to test the systems. According to the trailer manufacturer, with professional butchers it is estimated that there is the capacity to process 40 deer a day.
    - Goal of Phase 2 is to create a permanent cold storage and processing facility on non-APR land. Structures would be built to house the two trailers inside and connect them to a series of coolers that will be used not only for deer processing but also for farmers to:
        - Store vegetables and commercially processed animals.
        - Serve as a central location and cold storage for proposed flower cooperative for wedding planners and event coordinators.
    - Long term and expedited goal of Tick Free MV is to dramatically reduce deer populations, and the idea is that ultimately deer processing needs will drop once deer populations have been culled. The Ag Society finds this could open the facility up to farmers. For instance, a farmer could sell an individual one of their sheep that is killed on the farm and then the purchaser could process the meat for personal use, the meat could not be sold.
    - Other possible component of Phase 2 is to replace the existing maintenance facility and build a post and beam structure that would attach to the cold storage facility and provide office spaces for Ag Society staff.
    - Currently all butchering must go off island. The Ag Society runs the only state licensed poultry processing unit.
    - Mr. Houser posed a question about Phase 2 activities and accessory uses beyond deer processing:

- Is it more accurate to say that those accessory uses are taking advantage of the existence of the capacity created to meet the deer processing goals? Are the deer processing resources and infrastructure being created to expand capacity for these other activities? If there was no intention to do anything other than deer processing, would phase 2 planning be any different?
- Mr. McCarron responded that the Phase 2 plans probably would not get off the ground.
    - The deer processing is ancillary to the other facilities and likely to be successful rather quickly and disappear. Goal is to get the deer population down to about 1500, current numbers are around 6000. Once the numbers are down, doe permits will return to a lottery and the need for deer damage permits ceases.
    - Last year roughly 960 deer were checked in, of that 60-70 deer were donated and 900 were processed and kept by people on the island for their own consumption.
    - The point being that building the Phase 2 facility under the concept of building for only deer processing would not be worth it. Phase 2 is being built largely for the farmers and the agricultural community by giving farmers a resource that would independently be maintained.
- This raised financial concerns for Mr. Houser for the deer processing to continue and sustain itself if the deer population is not quickly reduced.
    - Hard to guarantee with multiple factors, including aging hunter population, but if the program is successful then hopefully the funding will be there. State is currently paying the butchers $250 a deer and Tick Free MV is providing the stipend to hunters.

- Question about wastewater infrastructure.
    - Phase 1 consists of a 2000-gallon tight tank.
        - Each trailer has self-contained freshwater tanks, about 500 gallons in each trailer. If they were processing 40 deer a day, they would likely go through most of that water in cleanup. Mr. McCarron thinks the processing demand will be more like once a week.
        - The tight tank has an alarm and will be pumped out as it fills. Wastewater will be shipped off island.
    - Phase 2 will include a new septic system. Phase 2 in general will go through extensive permitting and review with the Martha's Vineyard Commission, Planning Board, Building Department, etc.
- Peter made a motion to take a non-binding vote to support the project as described by Mr. McCarron, seconded by Ernie.
  Roll call vote: Ernie-aye, Noah-aye, Whit-aye, Robert-aye, Peter-aye, Chris recused himself.

Island-wide Tick Spraying discussion with Lesley Eaton

- Ms. Eaton and Mr. Houser remained present.
    - She lives right on the line between West Tisbury and Tisbury and has experienced issues of spraying on the Tisbury side. She found an article written by Cathy Verost on the negative impacts of spraying on pollinators to be informative.
- The Chilmark Board of Health drafted a resolution to regulate these chemicals and the state shot them down. The West Tisbury Conservation Commission's regulations regulate the area being sprayed rather than the chemicals themselves. Still there are concerns around aerial drift that goes beyond the standard Buffer Zone. We are currently the only Conservation Commission on island to prohibit spraying in our jurisdiction.

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- More companies are spraying now and education and outreach is important. It is helpful to have other organizations like VCS to help disseminate information.
- Road associations, spraying companies, and real estate agents were discussed for potential outreach efforts.
- The idea of a working group was floated. Chilmark currently has a working group focusing on this topic.
- Angela will reach out to other Conservation Commission administrators and will add the idea of establishing a working group to the agenda on October 20th.

Lamberts Cove Beach Dunes encroachment

- Robert was walking on Lamberts Cove Beach and saw people scrambling up into the dunes.
- There is an existing, approved path from the Goethals property. The beach was gifted to the town by the Goethals
- Parks and Recreation confirmed that they do monitor people going up into the dunes when the beach is staffed during the summer season

Administrative:

Review handout for Church Outreach event:

- Church event is October 28th at 6 pm. Invitations are going out to Church members, but it is not a closed event. They are asking people to RSVP.
- Handout can also serve as a resource to be mailed to West Tisbury residents. After the Church event the Board will allocate time to discuss a mailing outreach and whether to only mail to residents that are known to be within wetland areas or whether to do a more general mailing to reach a greater audience.

Guidelines for running an efficient meeting:

- Discussed when to abstain and when to continue a discussion to another meeting.

Correspondence:

Update from B. Athearn on 200 Lamberts Cove Road deer processing facility:

- Operations have ceased and a Notice of Intent Application can be expected within the next week or two.

Peter made a motion to adjourn at 7:10 pm, seconded by Noah. All in favor

Respectfully Submitted,

Angela Luckey, Board Administrator

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