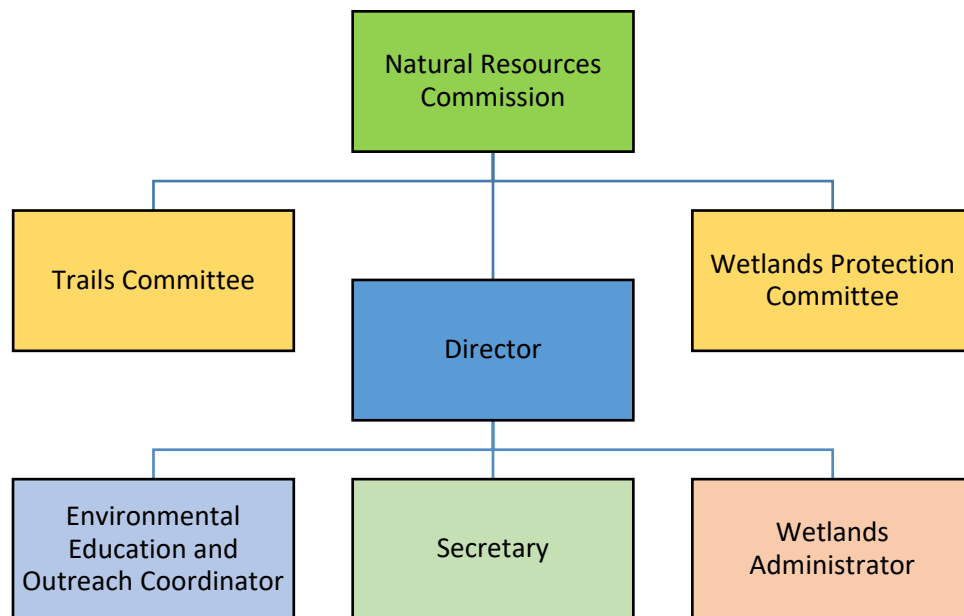

Natural Resources Commission



Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Natural Resources Commission to provide stewardship of, education about, and advocacy for the Town of Wellesley's parks, conservation, recreation and open space areas so the full value of the Town's natural assets can be passed onto future generations.



Department Description

The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) consists of five elected members with staggered terms of three years. The Natural Resources Commission appoints the 5-member Wetlands Protection Committee for three-year terms and the 10-

member Trails Committee for one-year terms. The Commission also appoints the Landscape Advisory Committee, the Long-Range Planning Committee, and other ad hoc committees as required.

The department is currently staffed by 3 full-time employees including the director, the wetlands administrator, and a secretary; and one part-time environmental education and outreach coordinator, which the NRC hopes to expand to a full time position this upcoming fiscal year.

Office of the Natural Resources Commission

The NRC is charged with the statutory responsibilities of *Park Commissions, Conservation Commissions, Tree Wardens, Shade Tree and Pest Control Officers, and Town Forest Committees* under Massachusetts General Laws Chapters 40, 45, 87, 131 and 132. The NRC appoints and oversees the Wetlands Protection Committee and the Trails Committee.

The NRC, serving as the Conservation Commission for the Town, delegates to the five-member Wetlands Protection Committee (WPC) the power and authority to administer and enforce the Wetlands Protection Act and the Town Wetlands Protection Bylaw. The WPC is supported by the Wetlands Administrator.

The Wellesley Trails Committee promotes, develops, and maintains the town's trail system. There are 47 miles of trails in Town, 28 of which are marked and have accompanying descriptions. Departmental staff supports the Trails Committee in an administrative capacity.

Representatives from the NRC also serve on the Community Preservation Committee (CPC), the Trails Committee, the Playing Fields Task Force, the Mobility Committee, and the 3R Working Group.

Accomplishments

The NRC is proud to report on progress in the following areas:

Climate Change

- Partnering with regional organizations to address gas leaks to protect trees and lower greenhouse gas emissions
- Participation in the Charles River Watershed Climate Compact to prepare and mitigate stormwater and flooding issues
- Adoption of the town's Municipal Sustainable Building Guidelines
- Participation in formation of the town's Climate Action Plan
- Continued implementation of the Town's Unified and Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) plan

Preservation of Tree Canopy

- Implementation of the Town Forest Management Plan
- Continuation of the annual Tree Planting program for residents and on parkland
- Support for State-wide Reforestation Bill and update of Public Shade Tree Law
- Participation in the Gas Leaks Allies "Gas Leaks Kill Trees" group

Protecting Public Health through eco-friendly landscaping practices

- Grow Green Wellesley's new "Pollinate Wellesley" initiative to promote biodiversity through the planting of native species
- Support of State-wide pesticide reduction bills
- Continuation of the Town's Organic Integrated Pest Management policy on Town-owned lands, including playing fields and playgrounds

Support of Active and Passive Recreation

- Review and approval of Thomas Lee and Diane Warren athletic field renovations, including the creation of a Wetland Resource Area to provide stormwater flood control and water filtering, as well as wildlife habitat
- Secured CPC Funding for design and replacement of Hunnewell Field (Aqueduct) Bathrooms
- Approval of lighting fixture retrofit to replace outdated, energy-inefficient sports lights at the Diane Warren Field and the Hunnewell tennis courts
- Restoration of Perrin Park basketball courts, with the addition of two pickleball courts
- Morses Pond Shoreline Restoration: installation of nature-based shoreline reinforcements to stabilize slopes, protect trees, and reinforce public access points. Project includes removal of invasive species and planting of native species
- Trails Committee maintenance and improvements, including:
 - Resumption of guided walks; trail restoration at Centennial Reservation; major cleanup on the trail near Barton Road in conjunction with the Wellesley Service League

Education and Outreach

- Continued environmental educational outreach to schools, organizations, and the public through innovative programming, including COVID-appropriate outdoor learning classes and self-guided lessons
- Execution of two popular town-wide Citizen Science projects
- Facilitate projects with Boy and Girl Scouts for program advancement, including the planting of a Tranquility Tree at Town Hall for people who have suffered through COVID
- Creation of Wetlands protection educational materials (video and mailing) for the general public as well as properties under jurisdiction

Warrant Article Requests

The NRC is not anticipating any Warrant Article Requests for the 2022 Annual Town Meeting.

FY2023 Goals

The following goals were identified at the NRC's annual retreat, held on September 15, 2020.

- Promote Environmental Stewardship and Education
- Preserve and Expand the Town's Tree Canopy*
- Promote healthy, hearty and pollinator friendly landscapes on Town land and on private property⁺
- Ensure planning, preservation and maintenance of passive and active open spaces[®]
- Protect the Town's surface, ground and drinking waters
- Continue efforts to repair Wellesley's gas leaks
- Advocate for Legislation that supports these goals

Each of these goals relates to Action and Policy recommendations explicitly outlined in the Unified Plan, including promoting protection and enhancement of the tree canopy, managing properties to promote habitat and biodiversity, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and raising public awareness about landscape best management practices by public and private property owners.

Similar to past budget requests, the FY23 Capital and Operating Budget requests allow the NRC to meet its statutory requirements as Park and Conservation Commission, including the enforcement of the Wetlands Protection Act and bylaw. The funds will also enable the Commission to educate the public about the importance of Wellesley's natural

resources and support efforts to protect them through the *Grow Green Wellesley* campaign, allow regulatory advocacy including legislative and grass-roots support of environmental policies (waste reduction, gas leak repair, tree protection), and fund landscape and watershed improvements (public shade trees, well-maintained trails[¥], pesticide-free and pollinator friendly parks, and ecologically healthy and recreationally functional watersheds). The NRC will also leverage these funds and grant opportunities associated with the Town Forest Stewardship and Bird Habitat Plan[¥] and the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness campaign: *Wellesley Will*. The NRC also manages the Morses Pond Capital[°] and Operating budgets, as outlined below.

Operating Budget Summary

All NRC expense categories remain level with FY22. The proposed budget increase of 24.64% includes assumed 2.5-2.75% increases for all staff Personal Services. The significant Operating increase is a result of the reclassification of the Wetland Administrator from 53-55, and increases related to changing the Environmental Education Position from part time to full time, and an associated reclassification. These actions still require Human Resources Board approval.

The FY23 Morses Pond Operating Budget increase is within guideline (2.37%) and includes modest increases in both the harvesting and phosphorus station budgets.

Revenue

The NRC receives filing fees for Administration of the Wetlands Protection Act and Wellesley's local Wetlands Bylaw. The revenue received depends on both the number and type of permits submitted. The Department anticipates approximately \$18,000 in revenue for FY23. Total revenue from both State and local bylaw fees for FY21 was \$21,435. The NRC also received payments for illegal public shade tree removals (~\$50,000) and a licensing fee to remove trees from the Town Forest.

Out of Guideline

The Departmental budget is out of guideline due to the reclassification of the Wetlands Administrator position, as well as the expanded Environmental Education, Outreach and Compliance Coordinator position. The Morses Pond Operating budget is under guideline.

*FY23 Capital Request of \$55,000 for Tree Planting and Management. This item is listed as a key action in the Unified and Climate Action Plans, and tree planting and protection will likely be a critical step in achieving the Town's greenhouse gas reduction goals.

+FY23 Capital Request of \$35,000 for Natural Landscape Development, which includes Organic Integrated Pest Management Program, Pollinator Corridor landscape improvements and Invasive Species Control in Fuller Brook Park. These action steps support one of the three critical Actions listed in the MVP Summary of Findings: Implement a Sustainable Landscape Program. These actions also protect Human and ecological health within the community.

⊗Request of \$15,000 for Park Path, Sidewalk and Parking Lot Repairs. This is used as an urgent maintenance item and is the most cost effective method to ensure the Town's parklands are safely accessible.

°The major Capital Expense for FY23 is a request of \$200,000 for the retrofit of the Field Lighting at Diane P. Warren multi-use field and Hunnewell Tennis courts. This request will help the Town meet CO2 reduction goals, and given the age of the current lighting, will defer future expenses. The Community Preservation Committee plans to fund another \$200,000 of this total request.

The NRC has also submitted 2 applications for Community Preservation Act funds for A field Utilization and Optimization study and Lawn Conversion project. Information for both of those projects can be found within the Capital budget narrative.

PERMANENT STAFFING (FTEs)	FY21 Actual	FY22 Budget	FY23 Request
Position Titles:			
Director	1.0	1.0	1.0
Wetlands Administrator	1.0	1.0	1.0
Secretary	1.0	1.0	1.0
Education and Outreach	0.5	0.5	1.0
Total Number of Positions	3.5	3.5	4

Natural Resources Department FY23 Operating Budget Request									
Org	Object	Account # 01-171 Account Title	FY19 Actual	FY20 Actual	FY21 Actual	FY22 Budget	FY23 Request	\$ Variance FY22-23	% Variance FY22-23
PERSONAL SERVICES									
01171100	511010	Senior Administrator	\$ 90,946	\$ 99,281	\$ 101,374	\$ 103,655	\$ 103,656	\$ 1	0.00%
01171100	511220	Other Professionals	-	-	-	-	-	\$ -	0.00%
01171100	511260	Wetlands Administrator	55,269	60,023	61,289	62,668	68,820	\$ 6,152	9.82%
01171100	511370	Clerical	41,322	25,048	30,958	45,870	45,673	\$ (197)	-0.43%
01171100	511220	Other Professionals	19,644	24,279	29,295	30,567	66,375	\$ 35,808	117.15%
01171100	569570	Wetlands Support	-	-	-	-	-	\$ -	0.00%
01171100	575120	Unemployment Compensation	-	-	-	-	-	\$ -	0.00%
		PERSONAL SERVICES SUBTOTAL	207,181	208,631	222,916	242,760	284,524	\$ 41,764	17.20%
		Benefits	-	-	-	-	20,000		
		PERSONAL SERVICES SUBTOTAL + BENEFITS	207,181	208,631	222,916	242,760	304,524	\$ 61,764	25.44%
EXPENSES									
01171200	517040	Tuition Reimbursement	300	-	-	-	-	\$ -	0.00%
01171200	534010	Postage, Printing	706	558	900	2,250	2,250	\$ 2,250	100.00%
01171200	571010	Travel - Mileage	1,134	977	552	850	850	\$ 850	100.00%
01171200	542010	Office Supplies	2,082	2,490	2,260	2,500	2,500	\$ 2,500	100.00%
01171200	534035	Advertising- Employment	-	-	-	-	-	\$ -	0.00%
01171200	534050	Telecommunications	866	894	881	1,400	1,400	\$ 1,400	100.00%
01171200	557010	Programs and Activities	162	459	1,040	750	750	\$ 750	100.00%
01171200	555070	Electronic Media	420	-	-	-	-	\$ -	0.00%
01171200	581661	Trails Improvements	3,332	2,264	3,636	8,500	8,500	\$ 8,500	100.00%
01171200	573020	Dues-Professional Staff	387	460	450	500	500	\$ 500	100.00%
01171200	571120	Conf. Meetings-Prof Staff	1,113	565	640	2,000	2,000	\$ 2,000	100.00%
01171200	571190	Conf. Meetings-Others	250	125	50	750	750	\$ 750	100.00%
01171200	530900	Other Professional Services	1,975	2,677	1,250	4,500	4,500	\$ 4,500	100.00%
01171200	534030	Advertising- General	537	677	107	1,000	1,000	\$ 1,000	100.00%
01171200	549090	Other Food Service Supplies	55	28	-	250	250	\$ 250	100.00%
01171200	552085	Fowl food	190	134	164	250	250	\$ 250	100.00%
01171200	543030	Computers Supplies	142	1,750	253	2,000	2,000	\$ 2,000	100.00%
	581513	Porous Pavement Maintenance	-	26	-	1,500	1,500	\$ 1,500	100.00%
	581512	Encroachment Markers	-	-	-	1,000	1,000	\$ 1,000	100.00%
HISTORICAL EXPENSES									
01171200	534040	Printing & Mailing Expense			59			\$ -	0.00%
01171200	578015	Late Fees/ Interest Chgs	35	15				\$ -	0.00%
		EXPENSE SUBTOTAL	13,386	14,099	12,243	30,000	30,000	30,000	100.00%
01171200	570000	Other Charges and Expenses	-	71				\$ -	0.00%
		DEPARTMENT TOTAL	\$ 220,567	\$ 222,801	\$ 235,159	\$ 272,760	\$ 334,524	\$ 61,764	22.64%