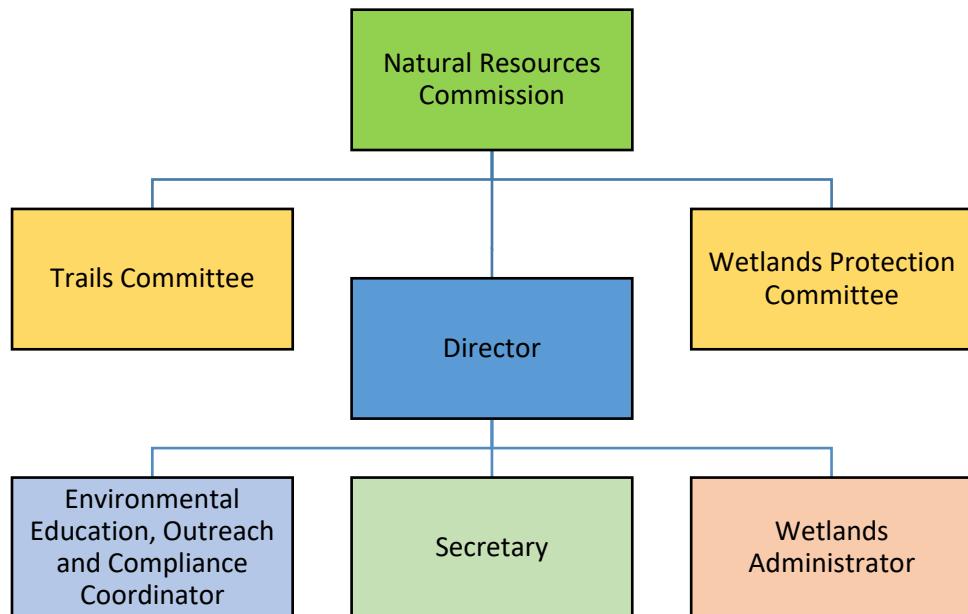

Natural Resources Commission



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 (WPC) for three-year terms and the 11-member Trails Committee for one-year terms. The Commission also appoints other ad hoc committees as required.

The department is currently staffed by 4 full-time employees including the director, the wetlands administrator, secretary and environmental education outreach and compliance coordinator.

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 support 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 made by the NRC, WPC, Trails, Town Departments and partner organizations in the following areas:

Climate Change

- Participated in the Charles River Watershed Climate Compact to prepare for and mitigate stormwater and flooding issues, develop flood model, and implement priority restoration sites
- Contributed to the Town's forthcoming Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Partnered with regional organizations to address gas leaks, protect trees and lower greenhouse gas emissions
- Participated in the Town's Climate Action Plan
- Continued implementation of the Town's Unified and Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) plans

Preservation of Tree Canopy

- Continued the annual tree planting program for residents and on parkland
- Completed a tree canopy assessment
- Participated in the "MassTreeOrgs" group, an informal association of town and municipal organizations with responsibility for tree protection that meets to share information.

Sustainable Landscapes: Protecting Public Health through eco-friendly landscaping practices

- Supported Grow Green Wellesley's "Pollinate Wellesley" initiative to promote biodiversity through the planting of native species
- Supported State-wide pesticide reduction bills
- Continued the Town's Organic Integrated Pest Management policy on Town-owned lands, including playing fields and playgrounds
- Completed design and installation of Habit to Habitat Lawn Conversion at Simons Park
- Restored Church Park landscape

Active and Passive Recreation

- Completed Playing Field and Court Utilization Study
- Completed 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
- Participated in ongoing Morses Pond Beach restoration planning and design
- Trails Committee made maintenance and improvements, including:
 - Resumption of guided walks; initial trail restoration at Centennial Reservation and repair of trail map houses

Education, Outreach and Compliance

- Continued environmental educational outreach to schools, organizations, and the public through innovative programming, including outdoor learning classes and self-guided lessons
- Executed two popular town-wide Citizen Science projects
- Facilitated projects with Boy and Girl Scouts for program advancement, including invasives species management and path construction
- Created Wetlands protection educational materials (video and mailing) for the public as well as properties under jurisdiction
- Follow-up and resolution on wetland violations and encroachments

Warrant Article Requests

The NRC does not anticipate submission of any new Town Meeting Warrant Articles for the 2024 Annual Town Meeting.

FY2025 Goals

The following goals were identified at the NRC's annual retreat, held on July 8 and August 8, 2023.

1. Protect and Enhance Wellesley's Natural Resources to strengthen their climate and natural resource benefits consistent with the stated NRC contribution to the Town's Climate Action Plan
2. Continue to improve the functioning of the NRC by addressing process and staffing issues
3. Improve stewardship and management of active and passive recreation space by improving use policies and planning/budgeting
4. Protect Conservation and Open Space by identifying short and long-term conservation priorities and developing Land Conservation Plan

5. Work to protect biodiversity, health and use of Town's ponds
6. Re-implement Encroachment Policy

Each of these goals relates to Action and Policy recommendations explicitly outlined in the Unified, Municipal Vulnerability or Climate Action Plans, 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.

The FY25 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[‡], the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness campaign: *Wellesley Will*, and grants such as the Accelerating Climate Resiliency Grant Program. The NRC also manages the Morses Pond Capital[§] and Operating budgets, as outlined below.

Operating Budget Summary

The NRC has made every effort to minimize budget increases. The NRC Operating budget total increase of 2.10% includes an assumed 2.5% or 4% increases for all staff members, and modest increases in 4 expense categories (Other professional services, programs and activities, travel and porous pavement maintenance.) The NRC is exploring reclassification of the Wetlands Administrator position, which is crucial to the Town's commitment to protect and enhance the communities aquatic and wetland resources, as well as the Director position.

Similarly, the FY25 Morses Pond Operating Budget includes modest increases in expense categories apart from Weed Harvesting, where the NRC is requesting an additional \$17,000 equivalent to one additional months' worth of Harvesting. As winters are warmer, invasive aquatic plants grow and proliferate earlier in the season which requires an earlier start to harvesting. These increases will cover payroll increases and additional hours for harvesting manpower and machine maintenance. The total budget increase of \$17,250 results in a 11.08% increase from FY24 to FY25.

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 \$15,000 in revenue for FY24. Total revenue from both State and local bylaw fees for FY23 was \$15,115. The Building department collected \$56,900 in fees from the Tree Preservation Bylaw, a portion of which was used to complete the Tree Canopy study.

Out of Guideline

As discussed previously, the NRC and Morses Pond are over guideline. The NRC budget includes an additional 17K to accommodate potential reclassifications of the Wetlands Administrator and Director positions. The Morses Pond budget includes an additional 17,000 to support additional weed harvesting in the early summer and late fall. All other expenses and Personal Services are within guideline.

*FY25 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.

+FY25 Capital Request of \$25,000 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.

^oThe major Capital Expense for FY25 is a request of \$250,000 for Comprehensive Pond Improvements. Dredging of Reeds and Duck ponds has been identified as a necessary step to ensure the ponds' ecological health and ability to capture stormwater. Initial sampling, modelling and permitting are underway, and these funds will facilitate implementation.



Town of *Wellesley*

FY2025 Budget Request

Natural Resources Commission Operating Request

Approved 11/30/2023, rev. 1/18/24

Department: 171

Department Head: Brandon Schmitt, Director Natural Resources

DEPARTMENT EXPENDITURES	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Budget	FY25 Request	Variance FY24-25	% Change FY24-25
Personal Services							
Director	101,374	103,656	105,884	110,009	113,193	3,184	3.01%
Other Professionals: NRC Projects	-	-	-			-	0.00%
Clerical	30,958	34,985	47,758	51,104	55,737	4,633	9.70%
Other Professionals: Env. Ed, Compliance	29,295	31,036	68,212	64,303	66,165	1,861	2.73%
Para-professional	61,289	65,666	70,759	74,091	80,083	5,992	8.47%
Wetlands Support	-	-	-			-	0.00%
Reclassification			-			-	0.00%
Unemployment Compensation	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.00%
Subtotal, Personal Services	222,916	235,342	292,613	299,507	315,177	15,670	5.23%
Expenses	12,243	14,610	13,710	34,300	35,300	1,000	2.92%
Encumbrance	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.00%
Subtotal, Expenses	12,243	14,610	13,710	34,300	35,300	1,000	2.92%
TOTAL	\$ 235,159	\$ 249,952	\$ 306,322	\$ 333,807	\$ 350,477	\$ 16,670	4.99%
PERMANENT STAFFING (FTEs)	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Budget	FY25 Request		
Position Titles:							
Director	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0		
Wetlands Administrator	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0		
Secretary	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0		
Education and Outreach	0.5	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0		
Total Number of Positions	3.5	3.5	4	4	4	4 benefit eligible	

Natural Resources Department FY25 Operating Budget Request

Org	Object	Account # 01-171 Account Title	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Budget	FY25 Request	\$ Variance FY24-25	% Variance FY24-25
<u>PERSONAL SERVICES</u>									
01171100	511010	Senior Administrator	\$ 101,374	\$ 103,656	\$ 105,884	\$ 110,009	\$ 113,193	\$ 3,184	2.89%
01171100	511220	Other Professionals	-	-	-	-	-	\$ -	0.00%
01171100	511220	Other Professionals	29,295	31,036	61,115	64,303	66,165	\$ 1,861	2.89%
01171100	511260	Wetlands Administrator	61,289	65,666	70,759	74,091	80,083	\$ 5,992	8.09%
01171100	511370	Clerical	30,958	34,985	47,758	51,104	55,737	\$ 4,633	9.07%
01171100	569570	Wetlands Support	-	-	-	-	-	\$ -	0.00%
01171100	575120	Unemployment Compensation	-	-	-	-	-	\$ -	0.00%
PERSONAL SERVICES SUBTOTAL			222,916	235,342	285,516	299,507	315,177	\$ 15,670	5.23%
		Benefits	-	-	-	-		\$ -	0.00%
PERSONAL SERVICES SUBTOTAL + BENEFITS			222,916	235,342	285,516	299,507	315,177	\$ 15,670	5.23%

<u>EXPENSES</u>									
01171200	517040	Tuition Reimbursement	-	-	55	-	-	\$ -	0.00%
01171200	530900	Other Professional Services	1,250	486	856	7,500	8,000	\$ 500	6.67%
01171200	534010	Postage, Printing	900	2,280	631	2,250	2,250	\$ -	0.00%
01171200	543030	Computers Supplies	253	2,332	-	2,000	2,000	\$ -	0.00%
01171200	534030	Advertising- General	107	456	426	1,500	1,500	\$ -	0.00%
01171200	534035	Advertising- Employment	-	-	-	-	-	\$ -	0.00%
01171200	534050	Telecommunications	881	1,079	756	1,400	1,400	\$ -	0.00%
01171200	542010	Office Supplies	2,260	649	2,258	3,000	3,000	\$ -	0.00%
01171200	549090	Other Food Service Supplies	-	15	-	250	250	\$ -	0.00%
01171200	552085	Fowl food	164	105	-	250	250	\$ -	0.00%
01171200	557010	Programs and Activities	1,040	662	640	750	1,000	\$ 250	33.33%
01171200	555070	Electronic Media	-	73	-	-	-	\$ -	0.00%
01171200	571010	Travel - Mileage	552	507	1,188	950	1,000	\$ 50	5.26%
01171200	571120	Conf. Meetings-Prof Staff	640	1,326	835	2,000	2,000	\$ -	0.00%
01171200	571190	Conf. Meetings-Others	50	100	-	750	750	\$ -	0.00%
01171200	573020	Dues-Professional Staff	450	379	395	500	500	\$ -	0.00%

Natural Resources Department FY25 Operating Budget Request

Org	Object	Account # 01-171 Account Title	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Budget	FY25 Request	\$ Variance FY24-25	% Variance FY24-25
01171200	581512	Encroachment Markers	-	-	-	1,000	1,000	\$ -	0.00%
01171200	581513	Porous Pavement Maintenance	-	1,453	769	1,500	1,700	\$ 200	13.33%
01171200	581661	Trails Improvements	3,636	2,707	4,901	8,700	8,700	\$ -	0.00%
HISTORICAL EXPENSES									
01171200	534040	Printing & Mailing Expense	59					\$ -	0.00%
01171200	578015	Late Fees/ Interest Chgs						\$ -	0.00%
		EXPENSE SUBTOTAL	12,243	14,610	13,710	34,300	35,300	1,000	2.92%
01171200	570000	Other Charges and Expenses						\$ -	0.00%
		DEPARTMENT TOTAL	\$ 235,159	\$ 249,952	\$ 299,226	\$ 333,807	\$ 350,477	\$ 16,670	4.99%

Wetlands Projected Revenue*

* Note that these revenues can only be spent on Wetland related expenses including committee training, mileage and supplies, etc.

Natural Resources Department FY25 Operating Budget Request

Job Title Employee Name	FY25 RATE REQUEST					
	FY24 Rate as of 6/30/2024	Group - Step	FY25 Starting Rate 7/1/2024	Step Adjustment Date	Adjustment Rate	Total Budget Request
NRC Director Brandon Schmitt	\$ 2,115.55	59	\$ 2,168.44	N/A	N/A	113,193
Wetlands Administrator Julie Meyer	\$ 1,496.73	55	\$ 1,534.15	N/A	N/A	80,083
Secretary (Full Time) Steph Tunnera DOH 1/5/22	\$ 983.08	45-5 7/1/2023	\$ 1,022.40	45-6 7/1/2024	1067.77	55,737
Education and Outreach Administrator Lisa Moore	\$ 1,236.61	53	\$ 1,267.53	N/A	N/A	66,165
						Total Salary \$ 315,177
Additional Wetlands Support/Scribe	\$ 25.00	7 hr/wk	\$ 125.00	N/A	N/A	6,500
Wetlands Fund Offset	-			N/A	N/A	(6,500)
						Total Salary \$ -